

Maheśamūrti, representing pañchabrahma, with three visible faces of Sadyojāta, Aghora and Vāmadeva
From Elephanta Cave, 8 cent. A. D. Pp. 18–20.

ŚIVA MAHĀDEVA

The Great God

[An exposition of the Symbolism of Śiva]

By

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At the Feet
of
Bhagavān Viśvanātha

स रुद्रः स महादेवः सोग्निः स उ सूर्यः स उ एव महायमः ।

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PREFACE

Śiva Mahādeva has been worshipped for thousands of years as the Great God of India. His cult extended from the homeland of the Śakas in Central Asia to Kanyā Kumārī or Cape Comorin on the sea-shore. There are numerous myths and legends associated with him. He was conceived as the God-of-the-Mountain married to the Daughter-of-the-Mountain. He is the Lord of Yogins and the foremost teacher of Yoga. He expounds all the mystic doctrines and the occult religious cults of Tantras, Āgamas and Saṁhitās. His great exploits are the vanquishing of the Andhakāsura or the Demon of Darkness, and Tripurāsura, the Demon of the Three Cities of Gold, Silver and Copper. He is also the controller of the Ten-Headed King of Laṅkā, named Rāvaṇa who cast a challenge to all gods and men. Our approach in this book is neither historical nor anthropological, nor archaeological ; by choice we have long been thinking to probe into the inner meaning of Śiva Mahādeva, identified in the Vedas as the Immortal God, Who has entered the mortal beings, Who is the same as Agni or the mysterious Vital Fire manifest in matter or the five gross material elements, Who as Arch-Yogī consumed the God of Love, Kāmadeva and re-created him in the subconscious world of the human mind and the conscious spheres of the human body or the central nervous system. It has been a matter of extreme happiness for us to gain an insight into the mysteries of Śaiva philosophy as limited not to cosmic lucubration but Yoga and spiritual Sādhanā for the control of the Prāṇic energy. It is this aspect of the symbolism of Śiva which received the greatest emphasis from the Vedic times and in the Purāṇas and Śaiva Āgamas.

The great Kailāsa is the symbol of the highest mind on which God Śiva has his eternal abode as the Universal Divine Principle wrapped in Samādhi or mental illumination where Universal Consciousness throws open its inmost sheaths for the vision of man. The working and powers of the cortex or higher brain are still a mystery to modern science. The ancient Yoga Vidyā has explained them in an orthodox symbolism or terminology which deserves to be studied and interpreted for the modern man who wishes to understand the fully chartered map of his personality as expressed on the level of mind, vital airs and material elements. These three are the basic elements described as the Three Cities of Gold, Silver and Copper, and symbolised as the demon Tripura who could be pierced by a single shaft released from the bow of Śiva, which is none other than the central nervous system, named as Sumeru or Pināka that is the Golden Rod or Axis of the human body.

In this symbolism *Kuṇḍalinī* or the metabolic energy symbolised as Pārvatī is destined to play an important role and that was made the subject of Yogic and Āgamic descriptions of the most pleasing kind. The vital energy of Prāṇa is the fiery principle of metabolism or basal vitality in which all the Yogins of the east and the west have believed from the ancientmost times. She was conceived as the Serpent Power which lies coiled in the lowest caves or chambers of the human body but when properly quickened unfolds her vibrating and buoyant hoods in upward sweeps and lighting up the five plexi or centres within the spinal cord into multi-coloured flames ultimately enters the brain through the *magnum Foramen* called *Krauñcha Drāra* by taking a crooked bend. Its entry into the three regions of the lower, middle and higher minds is a celestial event occasioning her Wedding with Lord Śiva. Its beautitude and blissful chain-action is said to be beyond the region of words. Just as human wedding releases the highest ecstasies of the flesh, similarly the wedding of *Kuṇḍalinī* with Śiva in the snowy atmosphere of Kailāsa or the Higher Mind is the great symbol of the Universal Bliss attainable by the individual soul. In mythology these regions of the hypothalamus and the cortex are conceived as the snowy atmosphere of Kailāsa where the Voice of Silence or the Eternal Speech rests in layers upon layers with infinite meanings which the Yogins decode as Knowledge by means of Vedic symbols or images.

The myth of Daksha or Sacrifice from which Śiva and Satī were eliminated is typical of Indian thought. This was a lower kind of Yajña carried on in the human body through sensuous pleasures in which the higher mind is pulled down by an uncontrolled ego. He was baptised by the terrible energy of Śiva. His egoistic head was decapitated and replaced by the head of a goat which was the Vedic symbol of the unborn universal, *Prajāpati*, called *Aja*. With the restoration of the normal link between the individual and the universal, human personality develops in an integrated form.

The foundation of the physical and psychical or vital energy is the Seed and therefore the highest emphasis is laid on Brahmacharya or the purity of the physical, vital and psychical sheaths in each body represented as the *Ūrdhvaretas* aspect of Śiva even though he has accommodated Pārvatī or the Female Energy as one-half of his total aspect.

The half-male and the half-female aspects of Śiva symbolise the two Universal Parents also named as the Father and the Mother or Heaven and Earth throughout Indian literature and also other great religions of the world. In ancient Egypt and Greece these definitions recur with truthful sobriety. In actual cult most beautiful prayers were sung as homage to the joint form—the Male and the Female (*Nara-Nārī-maya-vapuḥ*) and it appears that the symphonies of Nature are demonstrating this truth in every flower or life-cell.

The five faces of Śiva described mythically as Pañcha-Brahma are the five material elements constituting the physical, vital and psychical man. This was the basis of the triple structure underlying Vedic cosmogony and also the cosmology of the three *Lokas* by reckoning the material elements as five and the vital airs as two : this was worked into a scheme of the eight forms of Śiva, *Ashṭamūrtis*. The material manifestation of life in matter depends entirely on the integrated constitution of these triple aspects or energies. These were the eight Vasus of the Vedas, the eight Mūrtis of Śiva in the Purāṇas or the eight handfuls of flowers prescribed in the religious cult of Śiva. The *Gītā* mentions them as the eightfold forms of Lower Nature (*ashṭadhā aparā prakṛiti*), the physical body being its lower base and the vital airs and the mind its two super-imposed summits. The more we think of the mystery of Śiva and his mythology the greater become the orbits of our understanding their meaning. This study presents a session of the most intense delight which Indian religion, scriptures and Sādhanā centring round Yoga can present to the modern mind.

I had begun to receive these intimations in 1927-28 of which the first draft I put in the Hindi language in my *Studies on the Meghadūta* which I regarded as Kālidāsa's homage to the spiritual Yoga of Śiva. It was in 1961 that I took a decision to put these ideas into English language. In 1963, it so happened that Dr. Grace E. Cairns, teacher of Oriental philosophy in the University of Florida, U.S.A., came to study at the Banaras Hindu University and began to attend my Seminars on the Symbolism of the Vedas and the Purāṇas. I mentioned to her my idea of a book on Śiva which she very much appreciated and offered her full co-operation to see the book taking a physical form. I can never forget her enthusiastic co-operation towards the processing of the book. Thereafter my friend and philanthropist, Shri Gopikrishna Kanoria of Calcutta, generously made arrangements for the printing of the book. My son, Shri Prithvi Kumar, M.A., undertook upon himself all the details of preparing the press-copy with diacritical signs, reading of proofs and the selection and arrangement of the plates. This involved him in very onerous task to which I owe an appreciative witness offering my profuse blessings for his bright future and happiness. I am also thankful to Shri Shiv Kumar, M.A., for several of the line-drawings incorporated as text illustrations. The Chapter on Śiva drinking the poison (XIV) fulfils a query from Mahārāja Karan Singhji of Jammu and Kashmir to whom I am grateful for his interest in the book.

The idea of dedicating this volume at the Feet of Lord Viśvanātha of Kāśī was given to me by Prithvi Kumar and it filled my heart with great joy to accept it in token of my grateful homage to Bhagavān Viśvanātha of Vārāṇasī where I have spent the last fifteen years of my life as teacher in the Banaras Hindu University. I have now made Vārāṇasī my spiritual home establishing the *Vedāraṇyaka Āshrama* and the *Veda Academy* on the banks of the Ganges in a secluded and restful place. These intimations first sprang in my mind in this holy city of Vārāṇasī and matured during my stay here and therefore their dedication to Bhagavān Viśvanātha is a matter of particular joy to me. Finally I remember that Rudra-Śiva is identical with the Vedic God of Fire which I have held in adoration during many years of my Vedic study : *Agnirvai Rudraḥ* : *Agnirvai Rudraḥ*.

Perhaps a personal fact holding good for the period when this book was written and printed may be excused if I make a reference to my extreme illness through which the meditation on the Mṛityuñjaya Mantra of Śiva was carried to a condition of restored health. In these days of distress and darkness my wife, Smt. Vidyavati Devi stood by me as a solid rock. May the Grace of Bhagavān Śiva be on her ! She also wishes to add her adoration—हमरे जान सदा सिव जोगी । अज अनवद्य अकाम अभोगी । (Tulasī).

Banaras Hindu University. **Vasudeva S. Agrawala**

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

The Meaning of Mahādeva

Śiva is the great god, Mahādeva. He is the Immortal Divine Principle who has entered the mortal beings.[1] He is known as the Death-conquering Deity, Mṛityuṁjaya. The Great God is the eternal life-principle. He incarnates in matter and comes within the orbit of individual experience. He is unmanifest in his universal form, but manifest in each individual body whether of men, animals or plants. At each level of manifestation the immortal and divine nature of the Great God is evident. He represents the predominant effect of existence and the mysterious force called Life or Prāṇa.

Mahādeva is named as Rudra and Śiva in Indian tradition. He is identified with Agni or *vice versa*. Agni is stated to be of a double aspect, viz., Rudra in his terrible form and Śiva in his auspicious form. Agni is called the immortal god (*Amṛitadeva*). The Vedic thinkers expressed their concept of the Great God in a threefold formulation : firstly, the Agni is Rudra; secondly, that Agni is the immortal principle among mortals; thirdly, that Agni is the life-principle called Prāṇa within the mortal bodies. For example, it is stated in the *Ṛig Veda* : "O Agni, you are Rudra".[2] In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is said : "Who is Rudra is the same as Agni".[3] In the *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa* we read : "Rudra is Agni",[4] and in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* "That which is Agni is Rudra".[5]

The identification of Rudra-Śiva with Agni was basic to Vedic cosmogony. Agni was conceived of as the supreme god in whom all other gods reside as their one self.[6] Agni was understood as *prāṇāgni* the life-principle or consciousness that permeates human beings, animals and plants. Agni is also the visible fire produced from the fuel or sticks of wood in the altar of the sacrifice, but that is merely a symbol. Just as the fire in the kitchen is hidden in the wood or fuel, similarly the mysterious fire of life is enshrined within the body. That fire is really the god of sacrifice, *Yajñasya Devam*; he is invoked for the fulfilment of the divine purpose of sacrifice. Wherever there is the presence of Agni all other gods come there in a team.[7] This is the phenomenon that we witness in life in the case of the life-principle. Wherever there is this mysterious divine force of Life all other vital powers known as *devas* must be present. The ancient seers made Agni the symbol and basis of their metaphysical formulation. Immortal Agni has entered the mortals, and so the death-conquering principle of Rudra-Śiva as Mṛityuṁjaya is invoked in the entire Indian tradition.

The Esoteric Meaning of Mahādeva. Śiva should be constantly kept in view in order to understand the elaborate mythology which gathered around his name and form. Agni is variously derived as the primeval principle, the first force that initiated consciousness and generation. For this reason it was called *Agri*, the primeval one, which by esoteric etymology became *Agni*.[8] Whatever etymologists may say to this derivation, esoterically it was held to be quite valid as just a hint to lead us to the original nature of Agni as the first cause of all things. The great creator known as Prajāpati was himself conceived of as Agni for whom the fire-altar is built. The cosmos is the fire-altar and the human body also corresponds to it as the altar in which the fire of life is burning and kept constantly enkindled throughout the duration of worldly existence.

Agni is twofold, viz., hot and cold, the former being destructive and the latter benevolent ; so is god Śiva in his terrible or Bhairava form, dreadful and disintegrating; but in his form of Śiva is auspicious and sustainer of the life-process. In his former aspect he became the destroyer of the sacrifice and roamed about with a begging bowl in his hand asking for food.

The Meaning of the Bhairava Form of Rudra-Agni. The life-principle always wants food. If food is given it becomes pacified; without food Agni becomes a horrible monster ready to consume the very body in which it is enshrined. This is an obvious truth experienced in each body or the physical abode of Agni. Agni without food or fuel becomes finally extinguished and black ashes (*bhasma*), but if it

is supplied with its daily food or offering it is converted into the radiant flame of life. Food is called Soma and that represents the female or Mother principle whereas Agni represents the male or Father principle. When Agni is satiated with Soma that is the normal order of Yajña. In Rudra-Śiva mythology, that is represented as Ardhanārīśvara, the half-male and half-female aspect of Śiva, or the Śiva-Pārvatī form in iconography.

Śiva is said to be the god in Kailāsa. Anthropologists tell us that he was a mountain god. For the purpose of origins this may be partly right, but in the Vedas and Purāṇas an elaborate mythology was built in the conception of Rudra-Śiva and all those aspects require to be explained in order to understand the true nature of this deity. In the *Ṛig Veda*, Rudra is called the Father of the Maruts ; the hosts of Maruts are said to be the sons of Rudra (*Rudriyāḥ*). They are also the associates of Indra pointing to a conception in which Rudra and Indra, both prototypes of fire, were thought of as identical. In the *Ṛig Veda* Indra is the great dancer* as Śiva is the Naṭarāja in the Purāṇas.

Śiva is the presiding deity of the mind. In yoga tradition he is the deity of the thousand-petalled lotus which was the mind. Indra also in one aspect is called *manasvān*, that is, the god of mind.

Indra remains in conflict with the dragon Vṛitra-Ahi and Śiva is associated with serpents coiled on his body.

Indra is spoken of as the Great Bull, Vṛishabha, the arch-sprinkler of seed throughout the universe to fecundate the principle of motherhood ; the same bull who represents the god Kāma-deva was conquered by Śiva and made the leader of his hosts (*gaṇas*). The Nandī bull as representing Kāma-deva signifies the principle of *ānanda* or pleasure which is the source of all creation.

The poison in Śiva's throat represents the principle of death which belongs to the level of matter. The prāṇic energy soiled in matter becomes blackened by death and falls a prey to disintegration. The throat is the symbol of *ākāśa* or infinite space where the poison is allowed to remain without affecting the mortal body.

There is the moon-god on Śiva's forehead and also Gaṅgā, the river, in his matted locks. The Moon represents the higher principle of intelligence and consciousness, a kind of subtle illumination which makes the highest or transcendent supreme divine descend to the level of its material manifestation.

The Gaṅgā is the River of Life, the great flood descending from immortal heaven to mortal earth. Śiva's matted locks represent the world or creation in all its modalities and endless forms. The matted locks are as vast and complicated as the affairs of the world. The River-of-Life permeates every nook and corner of the worldly creation. There the flood of prāṇic energy remains concealed until it is released by the grace of Śiva and as the outcome of the principle of *tapas* invoked by human beings. The River is named Gaṅgā owing to her quality of movement, or the ceaseless flow from the beginning to the end of Time as a mighty stream which makes all bodies or material forms sanctified by its waters.



Naṭarāja Śiva. From Ellora.

Śiva's trident, Triśūla, is the symbol of the triadic pattern of creation. It is identified with Indra's three-pronged thunderbolt, Vajra, which pulverises every object or creature that comes into opposition to it. The three spikes of this irresistible weapon correspond to the three *Guṇas* or tensions which bring the cosmos into existence and also make for its disruption when they are discordant.

The creation is informed at all points with the great Śakti or fiery energy of Śiva. The whole universe is created by the Śakti of Śiva. This energy is like an ocean filling all space. She is the goddess in a maṇḍala or circle in which Śiva is the dancer. Śiva as dancer is performing his great Tāṇḍava. The dancing movements represent the oscillations of Śakti or energy. On the two sides of the Brahmasūtra or middle vertical line, the rhythmic movements are the steps of the dance. These deep stirrings are visible in the cosmos as mighty movements seen in the solar vibrations and gigantic movements

of the constellations and comets. All that is the great dance of Śiva on a stupendous scale, but controlled from a fixed stable centre. The more delicate rhythm on the spiritual side is compared to the dance of Pārvatī as Lāsya. Both are relative quiverings of the same power or Śakti, one in the male and the other in the female form; or, one in the macrocosm and the other in the microcosm; or, one in the giant stars and the other in the minute atom. Both Śiva and Pārvatī watch the dance steps of each other. These are both valid vibrations according to modern science, but the spiritual demonstrations of a hidden power according to metaphysics. Perhaps in world symbolism there is nothing so inspiring and deeply pregnant with meaning as the idea of the dance of Śiva typifying the eternal rhythm and polarity at the root of the infinite creative process.

The great dance of Rudra is demonstrated best in the rhythmic movements of the sun. Sūrya is an exemplar of Naṭarāja Śiva. The balance and rhythm underlying both in their dance poses bespeak of the overriding rhythm which is the basis of cosmic creation. In each solar system there is an axis around which all the movements and regulations are arranged as proceeding from a fixed centre and vertical line. God Śiva arranges his dance steps inside a maṇḍala of fire-flames and so does Sūrya the sun-god have his being inside the periphery of his thousand rays. It should be noted that Sūrya is not the dead matter orb of 92 or more elements but according to the Indian conception it is the visible form of the supreme divine or transcendent reality called Brahman.

The author of the *Yajur Veda* has clearly said that Sūrya is the symbol of Brahman, the light of Brahman is reflected in Sūrya.[10] If we wish to have an idea of the effulgent lustre of Brahman let us look at Sūrya the sun god whose radiation is measureless and who is filling all space by his shining rays of light and heat up to the ends of the four directions. The full glory of Sūrya is beyond description. We may remember that in each orderly system of the world there is a central sun representing the charge of energy and power in that system. We have millions and billions of such dazzling solar units, all placed in one axial alignment; and their totality would give some indication of the light and energy of Brahman. The same Brahman is the great god Śiva.

The energy of his Tāṇḍava dance is beyond the power of words. Constellations are splashed as particles of dust in space by the movements of his feet.[11] . The impact and stirrings of energy released by his movements are beyond description both for science and philosophy. His matted locks are dangled this side and that deriving their energised tendencies and dimensions from the depths of his spiritual being.

The sun, moon and fire are said to be the triple eyes of the great god. Fire symbolises the central energy whereas sun and moon its twofold extension as heat and cold, as light and darkness, or as the twin principles of Prāṇa and Apāna, the in-breath and out-breath, the introvert and extrovert forces that ceaselessly impact against the centre that remains stable and unmoved. That centre is called Sthāṇu, the *axis mundi* of the universe which is the same as the Great Arrow, Bāṇa, piercing the axial centre of the earth, the atmospheric region and Sūrya so that the three stand in integration for all time to come. Time is threefold but eternity is one; it cannot be parcelled out howsoever one may wish to do so. So does the eternal aspect of the Great God remain undifferentiated and one without a second. But in nature or manifestation it is threefold.

Śiva is the lord of yoga, Yogeśvara, who remains in eternal *samādhi* or in union with his own self, that is, a state of eternal illumination and unbroken meditation. His *sādhanā* of yoga is uninterrupted and he is the great master whom the yogins of all times and climes meditate upon. It is in this form of the Lord of Yogins that he becomes Sthāṇu or of liṅga form.

The exact meaning of liṅga is a symbol or invisible sign of the spiritual transcendence of Śiva.[12] No one can ever conceive the full glory or greatness of the divine reality. The supreme Purusha is for ever of much greater excess than his glory or *mahimā*. The cosmic creation being as vast as it may is the glory of the Lord, but the Lord is even greater than His manifested glory.[13] The Centre is much greater than the Circumference whatever be the extension of the latter. It is a spiritual victory and sure for ever; so the transcendence of the great god is the certain fact of his nature.

The liṅga form implies the source of creativity that is invisible and unmanifested. Its aesthetical roundness on the top points to its transcendent nature. In fact, the state of consciousness in which

the several organs of action are yet not evolved is indicated by the liṅga form. The liṅga is thousand-headed, thousand-eyed and thousand-armed. Its soul is universal and not yet individuated as happens in the evolved human form. It is the state pre-existing the image. In the ideal circle there is the head and arm and foot at every point because the fiery energy from the centre rushes with equal force to every point of the periphery and carries with it the totality of the thousand rays; but when the manifest form is evolved we come across a different situation of the various limbs in their proper places as the head, eyes, navel or feet. This is known as the manifested form of Śiva, Purusha-vigraha, in contradistinction to the liṅga form. The liṅga is the ideal and the image is the concrete manifestation.

Śiva is the Lord of all creatures and therefore called Paśupati. The word *Paśu* is significant denoting a prāṇic centre. Each paśu or living creature is an exemplar of the life-principle. In their differentiated aspects the paśus are numberless and Śiva as the archetypal divine principle of life is the Lord of them all. The bonds that keep them together are known as *pāśa*. Unless these bonds are loosened both by the grace of the Lord and the endeavour of the devotee, no one can get rid of them and the soul that is soiled by matter remains bound in the snares of death. The five elements of gross matter are such a snare from which it is difficult to extricate oneself without the supreme laws of Salvation or Deliverance becoming operative in the meshes of life with which we are all bound. This is known as *Śakrajāla* (same as *Indrajāla*) that is the mesh woven around the soul which is Indra.[14]

Śiva is surrounded by his gaṇas or hosts and pramathas or deformed beings. They are just caricatures of the human spirit or cartoons of normal personality, deformed and ugly beings, in whom the grotesqueness of mind and matter becomes concretised. The world is full of such specimens and aberrations of the life-principle or prāṇa. They are all subordinated to Śiva as the Lord of Fire or prāṇic energy; Śiva is therefore called Gaṇapati. The firey prāṇic principle when wedded to its counterpart the Soma or Pārvatī represents perfection and beauty but the deformities of the gaṇa hosts are specimens of ugliness that are the hungry spirits yearning for their share of Soma, the immortal principle of beauty and spiritual satiation. The gaṇas are controlled by their leader, Nandiśvara, the principle of bliss or Ānanda.

On the body of Śiva is besmeared dust or the ashes (*bhasma*). It signifies that fire is always accompanied by its ashes refused or dross. When fire burns some dross is left over as its surplus. When food is eaten and processed through the energy of digestive fire (*jaṭharāgni*), some kind of surplus is thrown out and then only the process of assimilation remains balanced with that of elimination. Brahman eats his food called *Brahmaudana* the boiled rice of Brahman, and when his bowl of food is consumed and properly assimilated the surplus refuse that follows is the cosmos. The creation is conceived of as the portion that has separated as a drop from (*drapsaśchaskanda*, RV. 10.17.11) its source the Brahman; it is known as *pravargya*, that is, the slice from the main cake or the store of food.

The great god Śiva is conceived of as the spirit in constant agitation darting with his bow and shooting shafts in all directions. He is like a hunter in the midst of a herd of deer whose arrows are raining on all members of the herd. This is the anger of the Lord against all creatures whom death is bound to take away. As such he is called the Hunter, Lubdhaka or Mṛigavyādha, with a bow in hand, Pināka-pāṇi. The individual prāṇa is the deer (*mṛiga*) taking to flight at the sight of the inevitable huntsman; but there is hardly an escape. The individual *mṛiga* or animal is prāṇa or individuated life-principle; it is the animal destined to be sacrificed at the altar of death. Lord Śiva is the only hope and door of salvation.

CHAPTER II

Deva and Bhūta

Deva is the divine principle and Bhūta is matter. Śiva is called Bhūtapati, the Lord of Matter or the five gross material elements. Deva is light and Bhūta is darkness. These two opposite principles are locked in eternal conflict which in Sanskrit is known as Daivāsuram. The Devas represent truth, immortality and light; the Asuras represent untruth, death and darkness. Generally they do not tolerate each other and the one is provoked by the presence of the other. That which is known as matter are forms of asuras. In the body of Śiva the devas and the asuras become reconciled and their coexis-

tence is expressed as the rhythmic dance of the Great God. In the scheme of the creator darkness also has a place as inevitable as light. This is the basic duality of the cosmos. Without the dichotomy of good and evil, of the devas and the asuras, of light and darkness, the wheel of creation could not rotate. Its movement is due to a twofold charge, namely positive and negative which in symbolism is expressed as deva and asura, or deva and bhūta, or energy and matter, or life and inertia.

All the devas are divine powers. They are said to reside in heaven which is the region of immortality, or a state of deathlessness. The devas do not touch matter; they are said to move in the sky and their feet always remain above the earth. The implication is that light remains unaffected by darkness and life is not soiled by matter. But life and matter cannot remain exclusive. In the scheme of creation they have to come together. The descent of consciousness within the body envisages the contingent role of life and matter at one point. They function together and operate with a mysterious adjustment which is full of order, beauty, power and fruitfulness. The mystery of the human body with the life-principle is unfathomable. In the body we find the deva and the bhūta working in harmony; that is the true nature of the presence of Śiva, or the auspicious god performing his Terpsichorean movements. Śiva is, therefore, conceived of as the God of Gods and the Lord of Bhūtas, that is, Mahādeva and Bhūtapati at one and the same time.

This polarity of his Being is the predominant truth both for science and philosophy. Science deals with power, that is, Śakti with a twofold charge which is positive and negative and which maintains a twofold tension in order to be effective. Philosophy also accepts this duality and speaks of the twin principles of Rest and Motion, the former leading to deliverance and the latter to worldly activity.

Śiva is the divine power of prāṇic energy that creates its form as the human body or the body of all creatures. This is His divine quality. Wherever there is fiery energy of prāṇa it effects its atoms of matter and builds for itself a case or envelopment, that is the body built by the integration of the five elements of matter; it is prāṇa that holds them together; when the life-principle becomes weak or deficient, the five elements disintegrate and death ensues. The springs of life are mysterious; they are a secret and have always remained so. These secrets of the life-force are typified in mythology as the son of Śiva named the Supreme Secret (*Guha*) which is another name of Kumāra.

Kumāra is Skanda, Son of Fire as already explained. Rudra-Śiva is identical with Fire or Prāṇāgni. As Śiva is the great god amongst gods so his son is spoken of as the generalissimo of the divine army or the husband of *Devasenā*. At the same time he is eternally unsullied and is a Brahmachārin, that is, a celebate for ever. The implication is that the life-force typified as Kumāra, the youthful hero, present in each individual centre controls all the life-forces that are operating within the body. How this is happening is from the scientific point of view the field of anatomy, physiology and psychology. Such investigations into minute details are being pursued today, but the ancients spoke a language couched in symbolism. They also seem to have dissected the human body and based their descriptions on an objective observation of the internal structure of the central nervous system, but the symbolical statements are somewhat mystical and appertain to the field of yoga.

The body is conceived of in the Vedas as the Golden Reed (*Hiraṇyavetasa*) which is handled by the two deities named as the pair of Aśvin gods. The Aśvins are the deities of prāṇa and apāna, the twofold charge of energy that moves and vitalises the body. Basically it is of the nature of an electrical charge. In later times this Golden Reed was conceived of as a Branch with several joints, *Viśākha*, which is another name given to Skanda. These joints are in the language of yoga the various *chakras* or gangliar centres of the central nervous system. The spinal column is that Golden Reed or Branch which consists of thirty-three vertebrae divided into five portions; in Sanskrit it is called *Merudaṇḍa*, that is the flag-staff erected on Mt. Meru. Meru is the cosmic mountain at the centre of the swastika-like manifestation of the universe; what is true on the universal level is also the truth of the individual body. Within the body the central nervous system has two portions, namely the higher brain and its extension as the spinal canal placed inside the spinal column and formed by the hollow tube of the superimposed line of thirty-three vertebrae.

According to the yogic texts, Śiva is the deity of the mind and has his seat in the higher brain. From there he controls all the nervous centres and the entire mechanical, vital and psychical activities

and functionings within the body. As the Great God he has to be present everywhere and direct the subtle vibrations of the entire constitutional system. His son is only a transformation of his nature and power and in the form of Skanda who controls the activity of the six *chakras* and who is conceived of as the leader of the divine forces or activities released by the power of the *chakras*, nerve-centres in the spinal cord. Five such centres exist in the spinal column, one above the other, and the sixth is the brain itself. Yoga teachers relate them to the five elements of matter as follows : (1) *Mūlādhāra chakra*, the coccygeal region named after coccyx, the lowermost sector of the spinal column in which the four vertebrae are joined together. It is related to Earth, the grossest element. This centre controls the elimination of fecal matter. Here resides the power known to the yogins as *Kuṇḍalinī* or the coiled serpent-mother which releases all physical energy when it is awakened by the conscious effort of the yogin.



Dakshiṇā Mūrti. From Ahichchhatra Śiva Temple.

(2) *Svādhishṭhāna*, the sacral region. This region consists of five vertebrae which are joined together as the bone called sacrum. These are much better developed as individual entities. The functions relating to the organs of generation are controlled by the nervous ganglia of this *chakra*. It is said to correspond to the element of Water which takes the form of *retas* or the fecundating seed in the human body which is the most subtle and condensed form of Soma.[18] In mythical language these are various gods and goddesses that have taken their stations in the human body and continue to perform their functions or do their duties while the full session of life lasts.

(3) *Maṇipūra*. This is the lumbar region. It consists of five vertebrae and its centre is in the navel which controls the digestive system. The element of Fire presides over this *chakra*. It should be noted that there is no flame or burning fuel in the nerves that are here but the fiery energy takes the form of so many gastric juices and acidic secretions which digest the food and process it for extracting life-building saps and secretions. It is in fact the foundation of the entire life-force and therefore Skanda is conceived as the Son of Fire. Although the seed which gave him birth was thrown into waters or the Mother-principle, it is an interconnected sort of thing by which the life-principle within the body is being produced and maintained at its highest efficiency and in an inscrutable way.

(4) *Anāhata chakra*. This is the dorsal region. It is a long sector of twelve vertebrae having its location in the place near the heart with Air as its element. This is responsible for the circulation of the blood pumped by the contraction and expansion (diastole and systole). It is the rushing of the air through the arteries and veins that makes the blood go forward from the heart and come back to it and oxygenating the life-stream or blood to burn its impurities. The Vedic thinkers speak of god Vāyu as the manifest form of Brahman or concretise the divine aspect as prāṇa entering the lungs and performing the miracle of keeping life within the body.

(5) *Viśuddhi chakra*. This is the cervical region. It is made up of seven vertebrae and its centre is the throat. Its element is *ākāśa* or Space which produces sound.

These are the five elements associated with the five nervous centres in the spinal column and the spinal canal (*Sushumṇā*).

(6) *Ājñā chakra*. This is the name of the higher brain or mind which is the place of intelligence and consciousness. It corresponds to the so-called third eye of the yogins and also the thousand-petalled lotus which is the seat of Śiva and his consort Pārvatī or his female energy. The spinal canal enters the brain in a bend and through a large hole known as *magnum foramen*; therefore the spinal cord itself is known as the curved one (*kuṭila*) and the big hole as the curved door (*krauñcha dvāra*). When Śiva and Pārvatī are together in the highest centre of the mind their union produces the miraculous babe known as Kumāra or Skanda. The five centres in the spinal column related to the five elements of gross

matter and the sixth one in the brain representing the psychical energy are conceived of as the Six Mothers and also as the six faces of the young Hero named Skanda. It is, in fact, the yogic terminology for the new youthful energy of prāṇa over which the yogin has perfect control. He becomes the leader of the divine army or all the divine powers that function in the body. Psychologically he is the hero of all the conscious and subconscious powers and becomes the conqueror of the hosts of asuras whose leader is Tārakāsura. The meaning of *tāraka* is transparent; Tāraka means a star; that star is the moon which is the symbol of the mind. It is stated in the *Ṛig Veda* that the moon represents the mind of the Creator (*chandramā manaso jātaḥ*, 10.90.13).

Sometimes the number of *chakras* is taken to be eight by reckoning three *chakras* in the brain, namely lower brain, middle and higher brain, or cerebellum, medulla oblongata and cerebrum. In the *Atharva Veda*, the body is said to have eight *chakras* (*ashṭachakrā navadvārā devānām pūrayodhyā*, i.e., the body is the City of Gods named Ayodhyā having eight *chakras* and nine doors). It seems that in the ancient-most yogic doctrine the number of *chakras* was counted as eight and the three parts of the brain were distinguished one from the other in a clear manner. However, it was permissible to look upon all the centres of the mind as a unit and then count them as one making a total of six *chakras* which were conceived as the Six Mothers of Skanda-Kārttikeya who was, therefore, named as the son of the Six Mothers. These were symbolised as the constellation Pleiades which consists of six twinkling stars. The babe himself was thought to have six heads or six faces with which he sucked the milk of his Six Mothers. The plain meaning is that the new fiery energy which is generated by the union of Śiva and Pārvatī, or Śiva and Śakti, in a new sublimated form is all-conquering which brings under its control all the psychical and vital functions of the body. The one preeminent quality or characteristic feature of Skanda is his leadership over the hosts of all gods who combine to prepare for him a grand chariot in which he moves; and he carries his irresistible spear (*śakti*) whence he is known as *śaktidhara* which gives him complete mastery over all the asuras. He is, therefore, spoken of as Vīraka, the conquering hero who is the lord of all the ugly deformed and grotesque hosts known as gaṇas. There are two kinds of prāṇic powers: one set is manifested in sarcifice (*yajña*) leading the life of order and harmony; the others are in all kinds of aberrations and out of the plumb-line or the vertical axis of the life-force. The latter are the asuras, the genii of darkness and evil. These are the gnomes, the ghouls and the goblins of all mythologies. They are also known as the bhūtas.

The victorious hero is Skanda who is but another form of Śiva for all practical purposes in the mythology of Śiva. He is the preeminent Deva, the Son of Fire and more brilliant than Āditya or Sūrya. Skanda is the resplendent energy of Śiva who has been nursed from one *chakra* to another in a rising order until in the sixth *chakra* his full splendour becomes manifest. It is said that a yogin who has attained to *samādhi* in the sixth *chakra* of the mind is never assailed by the darkness of the five elements of matter. In him the Devas have eternal victory over the Bhūtas. The highest centre of the mind is the region of ethereal light in which the vibrations of matter are eliminated.

The Mind is said to represent the two aspects of light and darkness. It waxes and wanes in the two halves of the month, but, in fact, is receiving constantly the reflection of the light of the sun which is always there. The mind region always under the influence of light is the higher mind or intelligence. It is the divine mind called *vijñāna*, but the other aspect of mind is that which turns away from the reflection of the sun or higher intelligence and falls a prey to darkness; this is the lower mind which is represented as an asura named Vṛitra in the Vedas and Tāraka in the Purāṇas. Although the body has its normal and autonomous functions dependent on prāṇa the real power belongs to the mind which controls both the conscious, subconscious and unconscious realms of personality. In yoga, the mind is everything which is withdrawn from all external sensuous affections and becoming introvert is made the instrument of meditation in order to realise the universal intimations. It then becomes merged in the universal centre known as *hṛid* in Indian definitions of yoga. The *hṛid* is the centre or point of the transcendent divine reality.

While speaking of Śiva as Deva one has to take into account the Indian conception of Śiva Mahādeva; one has to take into account the great myth of Skanda known as Kumāra in the Brāhmaṇas and Purāṇas or the Miraculous Babe (*chitra śiśu*) of the *Ṛig-Veda*. Just as Śiva rides in his mountain

chariot for a victory over the Asuras, so does Kumāra; the one holds the Trident, the other the Spear. The implication of the fiery energy of both is a complete triumph over the Asuras or powers of darkness, untruth and death.

CHAPTER III

Rudra and Rodasī

The name Rudra is so often found in the Vedas and the Purāṇas. It is often derived from a root or word denoting "to be red" or "ruddy". Red is the colour of *rajas* or movement and that may have been plausible for Rudra as the father of the Maruts. He is the deity of movement but there are several other explanations also of the word *Rudra*. According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Rudra is a synonym of Indra, the central vital airs (*madhya prāṇa*) which are enkindled or burning in each individual centre of life and verily there forms the life-principle.[16] The word *Indra* is derived from *indh* "to enkindle", by the process of esoteric etymology. Verily the vital air or prāṇa is a burning flame and, therefore, by virtue of its kindling nature it is styled as *Indra*. This Indra taking birth in the body or on the plane of matter is conceived of as a babe. As soon as it is born it begins to cry and is given the new title of *Rudra*. The word Rudra is thus derived from the root *rud* "to weep" or "cry". The question is, Why does the babe cry ? and the answer is that the newborn babe cries for food. The babe is hungry and wants some kind of food to support itself. As soon as the devas or divine powers associated with the central vital airs saw that the prāṇic babe was crying they understood the meaning of the cry and said : "Let us provide nourishment or food for the babe." This was done and the babe became appeased for a time, but after some time when the energy from food was exhausted he became hungry again and more food was given. Food and hunger form a continuous rhythm while life lasts. This is the meaning of the Crying of Rudra who is no other than the miraculous babe or prāṇic energy in the form of Kumāra.

It is said that this Rudra-Kumāra cried for food, but his food consisted of seven constituents. The first was *Manas* (Mind); the second was *Prāṇa* with a twofold aspect of prāṇa and apāna or heat and cold or negative and positive ; the third was *Ākāśa* or Space ; the fourth was Air or *Vāyu* ; the fifth was Fire or *Agni* ; the sixth was Waters or *Āpaḥ* ; the seventh was Earth or *Pṛithivī*. These are the seven kinds of food or ingredients of nourishment by which life of the babe was maintained. If we take prāṇa and apāna as two there are eight elements in the constitution of the babe or central prāṇa or Rudra. It is on the basis of this exposition that Rudra is called Ashṭamūrti or the god with eight forms which are all integrated in the human body. If any one of these constituents becomes discreet life ceases to exist. It is stated that these seven or eight names are given in succession by the Creater to the babe as he continues to cry or weep[17] until he becomes fully perfected in his ninth integrated form as Kumāra (*kumāro navamaḥ sargaḥ*)[18] which also signifies a new manifestation (*nava*).

To understand this meaning we should look to the constitution of the human body or the bodies of plants, animals and men. Everywhere these eight essential elements of mind, life and five material elements must be present in order that life may exist in each centre. Such is the dispensation of nature with respect to the material life-force that emerges from the mingling of the eight constituents. This Kumāra is the transformation of the energy of Rudra. This also gives us to understand how life depends on nourishment or food, that is, *prāṇa* and *anna* being dependent on each other and participating in a rhythm supporting each other. This plain fact of nature is couched in a symbolical language which is true to all times and all places and at the three levels of plant, animal and human life. Prāṇa is of the nature of Fire and Food is of the nature of Soma ; therefore each manifest form of Rudra or Kumāra, that is, the life-principle, is comprised of Agni and Soma ; in the language of *yajña*, Agni and the offerings made in it (*āhuti*) make up the complete circuit of yajña. The yajña is a *maṇḍala* of which one-half is Agni and the other half Soma which should not be short-circuited at any point. This is the Ardhanārīśvara or the half-male and half-female form of Śiva ; the male half is Agni and the female half is Soma. The Purāṇas name it as the *nara-nārī* form of the Great God.[19]

There is another etymology of Rudra in which he is associated with Rodasī. The meaning of Rodasī is Heaven and Earth (*Dyāvā-Pṛithivī*) ;[20] Heaven is Father and Earth is Mother ; Heaven represents the male and Earth the female and thus Dyāvā-Pṛithivī are expressed by the epithets Rodasī implying the male and female aspects of Rudra, the word Rodosī being derived from the same root as Rudra. Dyāvā-Pṛithivī or Rodasī is akin to Brahmāṇḍa or space-interval which takes within its womb the babe or prāṇic principle which expands in matter and makes up the bodies of all according to the predetermined laws of measurement. There can be no manifestation of the body without its container the Dyāvā-Pṛithivī or Rodasī in which the babe is nursed. The Rodasī Brahmāṇḍa is characterised by two essential features : firstly, it contains within its interval the Rudra or the prāṇic babe and secondly, that it is essentially divided into two halves, the one half being male and the other half female also known as the positive and negative aspects of a single energy. This implies that the basic principle of the Golden Egg (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) exists in the Rodasī Brahmāṇḍa up to the furthermost limit of Rodasī. The power of Rudra is coextensive and no life within this limit can be produced without the union of the two parents. Śiva and Pārvatī are the parents of the universe and this idea of paternity is applicable to Dyāvā-Pṛithivī also. When we look at the pistils and anthers in a flower we are merely looking at the male and female parents lying at the back of each manifestation of the life-principle. From the moment the ovum in the mother's womb becomes fecundated by the spermatozoa of the father the life-cell or the fertilised ovum starts to function ; it is a process of expansion and contraction which is known as prāṇa and which releases a series of chain-reactions known as the biological life-force. The first cell is known as the zygot and it begins to multiply and to be processed inside the chemistry of the mother's womb until it becomes full-fledged as the foetus and delivered as the child. The mother's womb is the most mysterious laboratory designed by nature or the Infinite Mother, Aditi. All the laws of motherhood or principles of creativity that are in the universe become focussed in the womb of the mother and they combine to create the mind, life and body of the babe. It is for this reason that the mother is adored by all ; she deserves universal homage and there is verily nothing higher in creation than the principle of motherhood ; that is the signal rank of Pārvatī or Ambikā, the Mother-goddess associated with Śiva.

The conception of Vedic Rodasī becomes Ardhanārīśvara in Purāṇic formulation. Male and female aspects of the divine reality are basic to biological creation. This mystery of the dual or two halves of the same egg by the potency of autofission is a mystery which remains unexplained and unintelligible for ever. How the one splits into two opposite principles of the male and the female or of the negative and positive is the highest metaphysical secret and also the supreme secret of science. In symbolical language the Rodasī aspect of Rudra comprising a Heaven and an Earth for each life-principle is the fruit of each being and exemplified as Pārvatī and Parameśvara or the two parents on the level of the individual and also of the universal. Śiva and Śakti are inseparable ; the one cannot exist without the other. Śiva performs his Tāṇḍava dance for the ambrosial joy of his consort Pārvatī who passively sits and looks upon the great dancer who actively responds to her presence[21]. But there is the other side also that the great god Śiva being the symbol of rest and immortality is eternally passive or restful like a dead corpse and it is on his bosom that Pārvatī as the Great Mother symbolising Infinite Nature or Prakṛiti performs her dance. She becomes active and Śiva remains in the background or immersed in eternal passivity. This is just as one would like to approach the problem from this side of the earth or from that side of heaven, since both are interrelated and spring from the same reality. Both points of view have been explained in Indian religious tradition. The two schools of Śiva and Śakti shake hands in an incomprehensible union of the two divine realities which ultimately in their undifferentiated or transcendent state are one which is indefinable and unborn.[22] The transcendent



The Tāṇḍava-dancer. From Ellora

one is split up into two opposite principles, namely the father and the mother, and in the Purāṇic legends Śiva and Pārvatī give birth to the six-headed Kumāra-Kārttikeya just as in Vedic cosmology the one space becomes divided into six regions, namely the four cardinal points together with the lower and upper directions.[23] Similarly, in the human body they are symbolised as the six *chakras*, five in the spinal canal and the sixth in the brain. These are referred to as the three mothers and the three fathers linked with one another in a pyramidal formation or a mountainous form. It is a circle stock-piling of the twin principles of prāṇa and apāna on the three levels of matter, life and mind. This chain is conceived of as a mountain (*kūṭa*) described as the Himālayas or Kailāsa or Meru. The conjoined structure of Dyāvā-Pṛithivī or Heaven and Earth is a veritable mountain of the axis of the world round which all activity is being manifested. Śiva is verily the god of the mountain (*giriśanta*) and Pārvatī is the daughter of the mountain. These are mystical expressions ; the mountain is erect stony formation : the stone is the symbol of solidified Soma which is the basic material for the constitution of the cosmos known as *Aśmā-Soma* or the same as *Aśmā-khaṇ-prāṇa*, that is, prāṇic energy stable like the rock. The Rodasī world of Heaven and Earth is the cosmic stable pillar or the *sthāṇu* or *liṅga* form of Śiva established in its foundation thas is the *yoni* of the eternal mother. It is a beautiful and basic conception of the creative process as intended by infinite nature herself. The two parents remain in eternal union in the body of Ardhanārīśvara Rudra-Śiva. These ideas have been elaborated at length in the Āgamas, Tantras and Śakti and Yoga literature but the fundamental idea of the twofold reality remains the same everywhere. The biological polarity and the polarity of physical science is essential to all kinds of creativity.

CHAPTER IV

Śiva and Daksha

Aditi represents the great mother in the Ṛig Veda (*Mahī mātā*). She is the mother of all the gods (*devamātā*) having eight sons : to produce one god she has one womb and therefore she is spoken of as the mother with eight wombs (*ashṭayonir-ashṭaputrā*). The eight sons are spoken of as the Ādityas, namely a team of seven gods, i.e., Indra, Agni, Mitra, Varuṇa, Bhaga, Aryamā and Pūshan. These are the seven immortals ; the eighth was Mārtāṇḍa, the dead egg. Mother Aditi thought that the seven immortal Ādityas could create life and so she approached them, but they said that being only immortal they could not help in the act of creation and so Mother Aditi came back to the dead egg, Mārtāṇḍa, and nursed him for a twofold activity, viz., the rhythm of life and death (*prajāyai mṛityave tvat punar mārtāṇḍamābharat*, R.V. 10.72.9.).

The meaning of this symbolical motif is clear, namely that the world is composed not of immortality alone, but of the polarity manifested as both life and death, or Aditi and Daksha together. Aditi represents the eternal principle of immortality and Daksha her son is the limited principle of yajña which is subject to disruption. In one mantra, Aditi is defined as being identical with Heaven and Earth or the spatial extension ; with past and future, or the temporal extension; with father, mother and son or the biological manifestion ; with all the gods or divine powers whether on earth or in heaven (*viśvedevāḥ*) ; or with the five tribes (*pañchajanas*), that is, all the classes of human beings on the sociological level.[24] Aditi is the mother of all the worlds. This grand conception refers to the universal form of Aditi or motherhood and therefore she is conceived of as the great mother-goddess, as the presiding Śakti of the universal yajña. But as the great mother she has a number of youthful daughters and a son named Daksha the principle of dexterity which becomes manifest in each individual yajña. Daksha is the energy of the Great Mother as her son and the universal Aditi and the individual Daksha must be reconciled to each other so that the process of sacrifice remains whole and the rhythm of energy does not become short-circuited. Daksha in this scheme represents the individual ego or centre of consciousness, *Ahaṁkāra*. He thinks that his sacrifice can continue without the universal energy of Aditi descending in his centre. His daughter was Satī an incarnation of Aditi or transformation of the universal Śakti for the performance of the individual sacrifice. When he organises a session of his

yajña he sends an invitation to all his daughters and all gods excepting Satī who was the eldest daughter and a goddess married to Śiva. Satī learned that her father was performing a sacrifice and so she asked her husband Śiva to accompany her to Daksha's home. Śiva said that he had not been invited and could not go adding that Satī also did not have the proper invitation. But Satī insisted on going and she came alone to the yajña of Daksha. There she was not well received and she also saw that each god was given the share of offering in the yajña excepting the god of gods, Śiva Mahādeva. She so resented this slight to her husband that she dropped down dead at the altar of the sacrifice. This implied a breakdown of the sacrifice of Daksha. When Śiva learned of this he assumed a terrible form as Bhairava-Vīrabhadra and came to the spot where Satī's body had fallen. He made short work of Daksha's sacrifice where everything was thrown into commotion and disorder. The implication is that no yajña in the individual centre can become complete without the descent of the universal energy into it as Satī and Śiva. The story says that Daksha lost his head and with him the sacrifice also became headless. The head is the symbol of mind and life or the two universal aspects of energy (*manas-prāṇa*). God Śiva was approached and propitiated and it is said that the detached head of Daksha was restored by joining a goat's head to his body. The goat in Sanskrit is called *Aja* or the unborn universal to which Daksha was brought into union again. As to Śiva himself he picked up the body of Satī and throwing it on his shoulder went about the whole land where the limbs of the body of Satī dropped down severally by which one hundred and eight centres of Śakti worship (*Śaktipīṭhas*) were formed which are said to continue up to this day. The moral of this story is the broad-based apotheosis of the motherland conceived in the form of energised centres for tantric and yogic sādhanā or for practising special meditation and spiritual discipline.

During his wanderings, Śiva became Bhairava the terrible aspect of Rudra, and roamed over the earth with a begging bowl in hand crying for food from the goddess Annapūrṇā which is another name of Mother Earth the eternal source of food and sustenance. Without the energy of the great goddess even the earth does not produce food and therefore the various limbs of the great mother-goddess Satī or Aditi got mingled with the earth which thus became the mother of abundance and fertility.

The power of Śiva as auspicious god becomes efficient against the substratum of the motherly energy· thus the seeds grow from the energy of the earth and the infinite power of generation that is in the mother earth.

In the *Ṛig Veda* it is said that Aditi is the mother of Daksha and also his daughter.[25] Similarly, Daksha is the son of Aditi and also her father. This is plainly an incest motif based on interdependent generation. But the truth of it is plain, for Aditi is the type of the great mother-goddess. She is the archetypal mother of all the gods and universal creation. In each object or centre of individuation her energy is coming as the effective instrument of manifestation : that is known as Daksha. Daksha is therefore conceived of as the phenomenon of sacrifice or Prajāpati who presides over sacrifice (*yajña*). But Daksha alone cannot function and he has to depend on the youthful daughters of Aditi his mother to assist him in the sacrifice. Amongst these daughters Aditi herself incarnates as so many youthful daughters of Daksha including Satī who is the eldest. This is merely the symoblism of interdependence between the universal Śakti and its individual manifestation ; it is expressed in the language of symbolism. There is no question of any incestuous intentions in the case of these metaphysical formulations. In fact, without this cascading of energy in several modalities there would be no creative functioning ; it is therefore conceived as the immortal energy of heaven descending to the atmospheric region and from there it comes to the material yajña or sacrifice performed in the material body composed of the five elements including the earth. Daksha represents the prāṇic energy which is all-powerful and controls the vital functions, but who is dependent completely on the universal energy symbolised as Aditi ;



Bhairava. From Ahichchhatra Śiva Temple.

conquered death by the power of his samādhi ; Yama, on the other hand, is the Lord of Death symbolised as so many Asuras. The bull is said to love the light of the sun, and the bison just laves in the muddy waters. In the Bull and the Bison we find the polarity of Light and Darkness through the two gods Śiva and Yama. They typify the symbolical statement of the two opposite forces of the Devas and the Asuras ; the Bull is of white colour and the Bison is of dark colour ; their meaning is explicit in the language of symbolism. After all it is a single Śakti which becomes twofold and the Bull stands as the perfect vindication of the Śakti of Śiva Mahādeva.

CHAPTER VII

The Nature of Seed

The Great Bull of Śiva is Kāma, the Sprinkler of the Seed. The Seed is the divine power as incarnated in matter. The human body or the bodies of all creatures are created by the the Seed and they develop by its potency. It may truly be said that all the possibilities of existence remain concealed in the Seed and they develop as the rotating Wheel of Time makes it possible for them to become manifest. It is stated that when the subtle form of the body was ready the different gods inquired of Prajāpati as to what was their location in the body. The Creator pointed out the Seed through which they were to find their respective stations in the body. This is exactly what happens since all the physiological, psychical and biological powers are manifestations of the Seed and are maintained by it.

The Seed (*retas*) is styled in the language of symbolism as Butter (*ājya* or *ghṛita* ; *retaḥ kṛitvājyaṁ devāḥ purusham āviśan*, *Atharva Veda* 11.8.29). This is nature's own technique to create the Seed as the summum bonum of all the bodily secretions and then to maintain the central nervous system and the brain by its energy. It is finally the cerebro-spinal fluid which in a very real manner produces the brain cells and irrigates them. The Seed is even the more refined substance ; it permeates the whole body and its various sheaths, namely the blood, tissues, bones, marrow and all the secretions of the endocrine glands and the spinal canal. It is a wonderful and mysterious chemistry that is functioning in the body or the physical, vital and psychical sheaths that are integrated. This Seed is the great power of Śiva Mahādeva and is symbolised as the Nandī Bull that is the sprinkling agent of the God of Love or the erotic impulses that appear at a particular stage of the bodily rhythm. As a matter of fact it has been said in the "Purusha Sūkta" that the blood and the rest of the elements of the body become charged with a rain of the minute globules of Butter[30] which means the fecundating Seed accumulating since conception for quite a number of years or for the whole session of life, and they not only maintain the metabolic heat of the body but also function as impregnating seed for producing new life. The seed is a very special kind of secretion, a transformation of the bodily energies. It should, however, be noted that there is a vital difference between the common secretions and the Seed ; these common secretions are just watery fluids called *āpaḥ* ; but the Seed is a secretion charged by fiery energy or Agni. The Seed is verily waters or secretions sparked by Fire or the energised cells which acquire the quality of fecundation. The Seed is symbolised as Butter ; the Butter is churned out of milk ; therefore it may be said that, the conversion of water into milk is paternity.

In Purāṇic mythology it is stated that in the preceding stage there existed the ocean of water which as a result of churning was converted into an ocean of milk. This phenomenon is repeated in the bodies of the two parents, namely father and mother who in the early stage of life may physiologically be conceived of as the oceans of water and during the next stage of their youthful life they are converted into oceans of milk surcharged with minute globules of Butter that is the Seed for fecundation.

The above formulation expressed in the language of science or biology is symbolised as the Bull. In the *Ṛig Veda*, the Bull is named as Indra or Agni or Sūrya or Ghṛita (Butter) who are all the deities of the stanza describing the Bull as the Great God who himself is immortal (*amartya*) but enters the mortal beings or descends to the level of matter (*maho devo martyāṅ āviveśa*, RV. 4.58.3).

The question may be asked as to why Butter is said to be a form of Fire or Agni. The answer is obvious ; if water is poured on the fire, the fire is extinguished ; but if butter is poured, then the fire flares up ; therefore while making a distinction between Water and Fire the Vedic thinkers adopted Butter as the symbol of Fire. The Brāhmaṇa writers repeatedly referred to this symbolism (*Āgneyaṁ vai ghṛitam*, ŚB. 7.4.141 ; 9.2.2.3 ; TB. 1.1.9.6 ; TS. 6.1.7.1).

Addressing Agni it is said in the *Yajur Veda* : "This Butter is thy body, 0 shining Agni." (*Yajur Veda* 4.17)

The Seed in men, animals and plants is a vast world of all the subtle forms that become manifest in nature. There is no end to its mystery and to the powers which inhere in it. There are innumerable seeds in manifest matter. This differentiation is developed from a single undifferentiated Source which was termed as the Seed of the Universe (*bhuvanasya retaḥ*). It was conceived that the single Universal Seed conceals within itself seven constitutents styled as the Seven Sons (*saptārdha-garbhā bhuvanasya retaḥ*, RV. 1.164.36). This team of seven sons is the symbol of the Heptad which creates or forms, namely the Universal Mind (*mahat*), the individuation principle (*ahaṁkāra*) and the five subtle elements (*pañcha tanmātrā*). These are the seven sons of Agni the primeval Prajāpati, and when they are linked with the energy of the Three Steps of Vishṇu they create the various forms (*vishṇos-tishṭhanti pradiśā vidharmaṇi*, RV. 1.64.36). This is the significance of the number thrice seven, that is, the principles which underlie all created forms ; they inhere in the paternal Seed that becomes concrete as the progeny. All the created forms of pāṇic energy on the level of plants, animals and human beings are dependent on these thrice seven principles of individuation which fundamentally exist in the Seed of which the Bull, Nandi, is the great archetypal symbol.

CHAPTER VIII

The Three-Eyed God (*Tryambaka*)

Śiva is spoken of as the three-eyed god (*tryambaka deva*). The three eyes are the Sun, Moon and Fire. The Sun symbolises the principle of heat, the Moon that of cold and the Fire a blending of these two. These have reference to the three-fold forms of energy or metabolism as we have it in the material body. In the terminology of yoga, Sūrya is the name of the artery called Piṅgalā, Moon that of Iḍā and Agni of Sushumṇā. The Sun is on the right side, the Moon on the left and the Fire in the centre. This is as it exists in the human constitution of the human nervous system according to the yogin who practises meditation. The Eye is the symbol of the conscious world;it is in a real sense the power of awakening; each individual awakes to the conscious world through this threefold canalisation of the physical, psychical and vital energy.



Śiva. From Ahichchhatra Brick Temple.

In a sense the Three Eyes of Śiva are the symbols of the trinitarian principle of manifestation. They correspond to the three cities: the city of gold which is Heaven; the city of Silver which is the Intermediate region; and the city of Copper which is the earth. These three cities are destructive when they are discreet, but it is the great power of Śiva which pierces them with his single shaft and keeps them together, or integrated, in their functioning. This is exemplified in the story of the demon Tripura who darted in space with his three cities and destroyed everything until he was brought under the control of Śiva's shaft.

The three-pronged Trident of Śiva is also a symbol of the triadic pattern. It is stated that the Trident of Śiva pierced the demon of darkness named Andhakāsura. There are many other triune principles in Vedic and Purāṇic symbolism, all of which exemplify as the three eyes of Śiva. In fact, it is the supreme triangle which extends from its centre and is of major significance in the Śrī-vidyā, i.e., doctrine or worship of the goddess Śrī. Each triangle represents the majesty or greatness of the god as his counterpart or female energy (*mahimā*) and that is enclosed by a circle (*maṇḍala*) which is obtained

by the expansion of the Centre to any desired extent. The Centre represents the Sthāṇu or Liṅga form of Śiva and the triangle or its maṇḍala represents the anthropomorphic form of the great deity. The triangular or circular form is conceived of as the yoni and the Centre as the liṅgam. It is the power of the Centre that it becomes differentiated as the interlocking triangles or the two forces inverted, one supported by the other as we find it graphically shown in the Śrī-Chakra.

Another meaning of the epithet *tryambaka* applied to the god has reference to the Three Mothers since the word *ambā* means *Mother*.

CHAPTER IX

Pañchabrahma

God Rudra-Śiva is conceived of having five faces (*pañchānana*), that is, a pentadic manifestation of prāṇa that becomes fivefold. The five faces of Śiva have been explained in the Purāṇas in several ways which have a reference to his cosmic manifestations and also esoteric forms; for example, five gross elements making up the macrocosm are the fivefaces of Śiva. The names of the five faces are as follows : (1) Īśāna (2) Tatpurusha (3) Aghora (4) Vāmadeva and (5) Sadyojāta. Of these the last, Sadyojāta, corresponds to the material element of the Earth. The second, Vāmadeva, is the beautiful face representing the Waters. The third, Aghora, represents Fire. The fourth, Tatpurusha, represents Air. The fifth, Īśāna, represents Space (*Akāsha*) conceived of as the Primeval God having the greatest majesty and having inscrutable nature (*adbhuta*).

The five subtle elements (*tanmātrā*) which create these gross material elements are also expressions of the Fivefold Aspects of Śiva; for example, the subtle element of Sound (*Śabda*) corresponds to Īśāna and Space. The subtle element of Touch (*Sparśa*) corresponds to Tatpurusha and Air. The subtle element of Form (*Rūpa*) corresponds to the Aghora and Ghora the auspicious and the terrible forms of Fire. The subtle element of Taste (*Rasa*) corresponds to Waters named as Vāmadeva. The subtle element of Smell (*Gandha*) corresponds to Earth and named as Sadyojāta since it is the youngest of all in the scheme of manifestations being placed last in the series.

The ancient teachers going deep into the esoteric exposition of the form of Śiva conceived of Him both as the Sthāṇu or Liṅga and also in His human form or Purushavigraha. The distinction between liṅga and purusha should be clearly understood. That which is unborn and invisible is sthāṇu or liṅga and that which is born in the body and becomes visible is the anthropomorphic aspect of the deity. The liṅga form is prāṇic and the human form is material. The further distinction between the two is that in the preceding stage of the liṅga or prāṇic creation the organs are not differentiated or distinctly manifested but in the second stage of the manifestation of the human form as the material body the two sets of the sense organs of action and knowledge become quite distinct as we see in the individual bodies. Of these two sets the first is that of the senses of knowledge (*pañchajñānendriya*) and they correspond to the Five Faces of the Lord and the Five Material Elements; for example, the faculty of Hearing (*śrotra*) has been produced by the element known as *Ākāśa* and the Īśāna form of Śiva which is all-pervasive (*parameshṭhī*) and eternal (*sanātana*) like Ākāśa.

The sense of touch (*tvak*) or skin functioning as the delimiting principle corresponds to Tatpurusha or Air.

The sense organ of the eye is the auspicious form of Mahādeva (Aghora) and corresponds to Fire; the eye can also become terrific or dreadful when it is destructive : its two forms being the kindly eye and the ferocious.

The next organ of sense is Speech (*jihvā*) identified as Vāmadeva.

The fifth sense is that of Smell (*ghrāṇendriya*) which is also known as the Sadyojāta form of the Earth. Amongst bodies of all creatures these five forms are found.

If we look at the Five Organs of Action they also manifest the Five Forms of the God Śiva as Rudra or the prāṇic principle. Where else do these distinctions of the Fivefold Sense Organs originate except from the mysterious power of prāṇic Rudra ? This was the explanation given by the Ṛishis.

For example, the Tongue is said to be the organ that corresponds to Īśāna or Space; the Hands to Tatpurusha or Air; the feet to Aghora; the organ of fecundation to Vāmadeva and of fecal elimination to Sadyojāta. Those who are conversant with Vedic symbolism thus explain the prāṇic constitution of the human body.

There is yet another explanation of the Pañchabrahma doctrine of the Five Forms of Śiva which are much more basic as being the root cause of all creation both in its material (*upādāna*) and efficient cause (*nimitta*). The first form, namely Īśāna, corresponds to the individual soul (*kshetrajña purusha* "knower of the field"). The second form is *prakṛiti* that animates from the Tatpurusha and is unmanifest and invisible. The third form is the Universal Consciousness or Intelligence named the Aghora aspect produced by the element of Fire. The fourth is the Principle of Individuation (*ahaṁkara*) named as Vāmadeva Mūrti which exists everywhere and its emergence may be seen in any centre of consciousness. The fifth one is known as the Mind (*manastattva*) and named Sadyojāta. It is said that this doctrine of the Five Forms of Śiva was explained by Nandīśvara, Leader of the Gaṇa Hosts of Śiva, to the Upanishadic teacher Sanatkumāra. It presents a clear-cut scheme of the individual manifestation of the divine energy that is the mutual relationship of the universal soul and the individual soul. It is the same as the doctrine of the Field and the Knower-of-the-Field in the *Gītā* (*Kshetra-kshetrajña vichāra*). It appears that this philosophical approach to the explanation of the soul has been formulated in the *Ṛig Veda* itself where the Knower-of-the-Field (*Kshetravid*) is questioned by one who was not conversant with the details of this knowledge (*akshetravid*) and is instructed by him (RV. 10.32.7). Pāṇini refers to persons who moved in absence of self-knowledge (*akshaitrajña*, *Ashṭādhyāyī*, 7.3.30).

The symbolism of the Five Faces of Śiva was of ancient origin and rooted in Vedic metaphysical thought. In fact, the seers explained the scheme of pentadic manifestations in terms of Yajña and Agni and Soma and Purusha. It is said that the Great Being or Purusha or his fiery prāṇic energy is fivefold in his individual manifestation and the integrated form of the five is represented by each individual being (*pañcheshvantaḥ purusha āviveśa*). Agni is spoken of as the deity of yajña and the latter is said to be threefold (*trivit*), having five courses (*pañchayāma*) and seven threads (*saptatantu*). The whole cosmic scheme is conceived of as a primeval sacrifice which also creates the individual life. We see in each human centre the threefold scheme of Mind, Life and Matter and each of them is fivefold.

For example, the Mind or the Psychical Scheme is represented by the Five Sheaths (*pañchakośa*) of gross and subtle nature, and the one emboxed within the other. For example, the Physical Sheath (*annamayakośa*) contains within it the Vital Sheath (*prāṇamayakośa*); the Vital Sheath contains the Mental Sheath (*manomayakośa*); this latter contains the realm of the Higher Intelligence (*vijñānamayakośa*); and this fourth sheath contains the Highest World of Bliss (*ānandamayakośa*) which is the same as Brahman. These five correspond to the threefold creation of Mind, Life and Matter; for example Ānanda and Vijñāna belong to the region of Mind, the two sheaths of Prāṇa and Anna belong to the material body, and Manas lies between the two sometimes in affiliation with the lower world of Matter and sometimes with the higher world of the Mind.

These five are also styled as *Pañcha-Jana* or the Five Tribes which make up the political organisation—of the Kingdom of Prajāpati. The Five Tribes are explained in the *Āraṇyaka Parva* as the Fivefold Agni from whom five branches of ruling families are descended (*pañchavaṁśakara pāñcha-janya agni*, Mbh. III. 210.5-14). There are several other explanations of the *pañcha-jana* doctrine; for example, it is said that the followers of the Yajña school explained the four faces and the sacrificer as *pañcha-jana*. The followers of the Adhyātma school explained *pañcha-jana* as the five sense organs, namely eye, ear mind, speech and vital airs. The exponents of the Historical school explain them as *pitara* or pitṛis (manes), devas, men, gandharvas and sarpas (read *ṛishis* for *sarpa*). These meaning the Five Peoples signify Five Temperaments or types of behaviour : (1) the Ṛishi type is austere and remains completely detached and represents Wisdom and Knowledge to which the seers devoted and which bursts on the mind; (2) the Deva type that takes interest in the world but keeping to its pure divine nature which it does not allow to be soiled by Āsuric forces; (3) the Pitṛi type or Manes who take active interest in worldly affairs and home life giving themselves generously to the welfare of the members of the family; (3) the Gandharva type given to merriment and pleasure, dance and music being jolly themselves and making

others happy and gay, the hail-fellow-well-met type, giggling and rejoicing; (5) the Manushya type in whom all these different temperaments become manifest from time to time.

Since we see these five types in the human body they are taken to exist in their Source which is the Universal Archetypal or the divine transcendence of the Great God; that which is Here also exists There : this is the law of creation. *This is equal to That and That is the model of This.* When we think of the Five Great Elements of which a human being is the composite form we can see the same pentadic differentiation in the form of Śiva as his Five Faces. A Face is the means of prāṇic assimilation and the Five Elements constitute the five means which are separate but also integrated as the Five Elements are. The Five Elements may also be conceived of as forming the two jaws (*nānā hanū*) in which Space and Air are on the upper side and Water and Earth on the lower side with the element of Fire in the centre.

The Five Faces of the God Śiva point to a basic concept in which the whole cosmos is conceived to be rooted in a fivefold scheme at all levels of creation. This should be grasped clearly as the secret key of the Pañchabrahma doctrine symbolised in the Five Heads of Śiva.

The Three Eyes of the God Mahādeva and his Five Faces are but significant symbols of the spiritual constitution of human personality : without them there can be no conception of any creative form of prāṇic energy. One has, therefore, to understand the iconographic forms as the alphabet of a language that is universal and endless in time and space.

These explanations are given in the *Bṛihad-Devatā* of Śaunaka (7.66-72); but a teacher named Śākaṭāyana considered the four Varṇas and the fifth Nishāda as the Five Tribes. The meaning of Pañcha-Jana was an open question, but there is no doubt that the symbolism was known to the *Ṛig Veda* where Indra is said to be the sole Lord of the Pañcha-Janas and therefore known as *Pāñcha-Janya*, "*ekaṁ tva satpatiṁ pāñchajanyam*". (RV. 5.32.11) The fivefold deities are referred to in the *Ṛig Veda* 10.55.3, where it is also stated that the Five Lovable Ones entered a single abode.

The Pañcha-Janas may have really existed as Five Tribes but there is no doubt from several passages of the *Ṛig Veda* that they have been made the basis of a well understood symbolism. For example, the sage Atri is spoken of as *Pāñcha-Janya*. The sage Pāñcha-Janya is said to be honored by the Five Tribes (RV. 1.117.3), or the single *prāṇa* who was the leader of the five other *prāṇas*. There were two kinds of *pañcha-janas*, namely those born from the Cows (*gojāta*) and those from *yajña* (*yajñiyāsaḥ*, RV. 10.53.5). Those born from the Cow were also known *ūrjādaḥ*, that is, drinkers of the strength-giving milk from the four uddurs of the universal cow Virāj or of its fourfold energy in the individual centre (*chatasra ūrjaṁ duduhe payāṁsi*, RV. 8.100.10). The four udders of the Cow or the physical energy in the individual centre are explained in a rather obscure symbolism as follows : their sacrificial names as adopted in ritual are (1) *vashaṭkāra*, (2) *svadhākāra*, (3) *svāhākāra*, and (4) *hantakāra*. These four teats of the Cow respectively feed the (1) Ṛishis, (2) the Pitṛis, (3) the Devas and (4) the Men. The latter tetrad in the human body corresponds to (1) higher intelligence (*buddhi*), (2) mind (*manas*), (3) vital airs (*prāṇa*) and (4) body (*śarīra*). The fifth principle which was the most subtle and indefinable was known as *parama*, that is the highest of all or the Invisible Source of the other four (*kva svidasyāḥ paramaṁ jagāma*, RV. 8.100.10). This is the explanation of the five-coursed sacrifice (*pañchayāma yajña*) mentioned in the *Ṛig Veda* (RV. 10.124.1; 10.52.4).

The Pañcha-Janas were also known as Pañcha-Kṛishṭi, Five Cultures (RV. 4.38.10), or Pañcha-Kshitis, Five Plough-lands, or Five Abodes (RV. 5.35.2). These five constituents were also named as *Pañcha Charshaṇi*.

The pentadic scheme of the cosmos as expressed in the fivefold prāṇic energies, the five senses and the five gross elements, represent the five faces of the great god Śiva, Mahādeva.

CHAPTER X

The Three Mothers

The word *ambā* also means "*mother*" and the Great God Śiva as *tryambaka* also signifies the composite form of the three mothers or creative principles. In the Vedic literature the three mothers are named as *ambā*, *ambikā* and *ambālikā*. They are but forms of the power or energy of Rudra who on the level of matter is conceived of as *Aśvaka* the principle of individuated *prāṇa*. He falls in love with Subhadrā the auspicious mother which is but another name of Pārvatī. This Subhadrā resides in a plant of yellowish hue named *kāmpīla*. This is a small plant as a type of the individual, being a symbol well understood. In Purāṇic mythology, the symbolism of the Three Mothers is much more explicit and the Three Mothers are Mahādurgā, Mahālaksmī, Mahāsarasvatī. Amongst these Mahādurgā is of dark colour (*kālī*); Mahāsarasvatī is white (*sarva-śuklā*) and Mahālaksmī is yellow (*pītāmbarā*).

One can clearly understand the meaning and truth of this symbolism on the prismatic distribution of the several colours of the rainbow or the spectrum in the laboratory which shows the seven colours with blue in the one sector and red in the other. This is exemplified in the rainbow. With reference to the great god Śiva it is explicitly stated that the one side of his bow is Blue and the other Red (*nīlam asyodaraṁ lohitaṁ prishṭham*), that is, in the curved body of the bow the stomach or the inner band is blue and the backside or convex side is red (*Atharva Veda*, Vrātya Hymn, 15.1.7). This is obviously the symbolism of the modern formula *Vibgyor* which is based on different wave-lengths according to the variation of colours; that is variously spoken of as the Team of Seven Sons of Agni or the Seven Sisters or the Seven Rays of the Sun or the Seven Horses yoked to the Solar Chariot. There is a grand description of the Sun's chariot found in the *Yajur Veda* and also in the *Matsya* and other *Purāṇas*. The different energy tensions or prāṇic vibrations are called the different teams of ṛishis (*virūpāsaḥ ṛishaya*, RV. 10.62.5). They are said to have deep stirrings, that is, wave-lengths as we know them in science today. Basically they are one as the primeval undulating energy or prāṇic ṛishis existing in the body of Brahman and also conceived of as the Seven Sons of Agni or the primeval fiery energy. The heptad of these Seven Sages is the basis of all creation. They are the cause of energy tensions as we see them existing in every solar ray. Their numbers and majesties are infinite and they are co-extensive with the creativity of Brahman. In Sanskrit terminology, the *Vibgyor* symbolism of the seven different wave-lengths in terms of their colours is expressed as the ṛishis, devas, gandharvas, apsarasas, sarpas, grāmaṇis and rākshasas who are characterised by temperamental differences originating from the different mouldings of their minds.



The Dancing God. From Ellora.

If we look at the spectrum of each solar ray we have a clear demonstration of dark at one end, yellow in the centre and red at the other. These are the three godesses. The Mahākali aspect is the same as violet, indigo and blue representing the darkness of creation. The blue light is the source of manifest cosmos. In the centre is the green, yellow and orange colours represented by Mahālakshmi also known as *pītāmbarā*, the yellow-robed consort of Vishṇu; and lastly we have the other end with its emphasised red hue, losing itself in an overall white which is the form of each ray in its conjoint form.

These are the Three Mothers of Creation and their composite form is symbolised as Tryambaka; they are like the Three Eyes of the Great God also called *virūpāksha*, that is, having different colours or forms of eyes. The central one is shown as the vertical eye and the other two as horizontal. The word *virūpa* points to the differentiation in the coloured demonstrations or rays which the eyes catch and the word *virūpāksha* points to the same phenomenon as *tryambaka*, or *virūpāsaḥ*. We are

informed by the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that the primeval ṛishis were the prāṇas (*prāṇā vāva ṛishayaḥ*); and prāṇa always is distinguished by its trinitarian form, namely prāṇa on the one side, *apāna* on the other and *vyāna* in the centre.

It is stated that the great Bow of Śiva with which he shoots his arrow is the same as the rainbow in the sky which is also said to be the bow of Indra (*sa dhanurādatta tadevendradhanuḥ, Atharva Veda* 15.1.6). The principle of the Three Eyes is exemplified in the seven colours of the rainbow which was taken to represent the Bow of Indra and the Bow in the hands of Rudra. "These Rudras are innumerable occupying the threefold division of Heaven, Atmosphere and Earth and also filling the four quarters of space" (*Yajur Veda* 16.54.63-66). Many are the shafts of Rudra which he shoots in all directions with his Bow. It is prayed that the bow and arrows of the mountain god may be auspicious that the whole world may become *sumaṅgala* or highly auspicious.

It should be noted that the Great God Śiva is exemplified as Sūrya the visible symbol of *trayīvidyā*, which is the same as the Trident of Mahādeva. According to Purāṇic conceptions Śiva has the blue complexion of *Ākāśa* (*nīlagrīva*), the red complexion (*tāmra* or *lohita*) of Fire and white complexion (*śukla*). The existent Brahman became diversified as three for the sake of creation (*ekaṁ hi sattattredhā bhavat*, AB. 3.28). The primeval principle of prāṇa or Agni as symbolised by Rudra became diversified as the threefold phenomena of Agni, Vāyu and Āditya that are the basis of all Vedic and Purāṇic trinities[31]. " He split himself as three. Agni was one-third, Āditya or Sūrya was one-third and Vāyu was one-third ; thus Prāṇa became threefold." This expresses in clear and unequivocal terms the threefold constitution of the cosmos and the prāṇic energy that is its source and the same is symbolised in the Tryambaka aspect of Śiva, i.e., the three Mothers or three wombs essential for threefold generation.

The conception of the Three Mothers stood at the back of the Three Births of Agni-Rudra termed as the Three Great Truths. Agni was therefore also called the Three-headed God (*trimūrdhā*, RV. 146.1) and that " which was three-faced also was of seven rays " (*saptaraśmiḥ*, RV. 1.146.1). The *Atharva Veda* states explicitly that the *jātavedas* god Agni was one in the beginning, but became diversified as three (*ekas tredhā vihito jātavedāḥ*, AV. 18.4.11). Agni is the symbol of heat and Āditya of light and the two are represented in the form of Śiva as the poisonous heat and the cool rays of the moon. The face of lofty Agni in Heaven is the bright and holy light of Sūrya who is the same as Indra and Rudra ; that face is filling the three worlds of Earth, Air and Sky (RV. 1.173.8). The great prāṇic principle of Agni is being created from day to day (*aharahaḥ*) and month to month (*māsimāsi*) and thus making up the cycle of its annual manifestation by the gods in their macrocosmic and microcosmic Fire Altar (RV. 10.52.3). What the gods did the Mothers do, namely give birth to Agni (RV. 10.91.6). Agni stands as the stable god in his big abode (RV. 3.6.4).

In the *Ṛig Veda*, we also have the epithet *Trimātā* as an equivalent of Tryambaka (RV. 3.56.5), applied to Agni as the Son of Three Mothers. We know from many other references both in the *Ṛig Veda* and the Brāhmaṇas that Agni was another name of Rudra and the whole conception of both was co-extensive.

Sugandhi or the Sweet Perfume of Rudra. As we have explained, Rudra is both a dreadful god and an auspicious deity in the form of Śiva. As Rudra he is the Lord of Asuras ; as Śiva that of the Devas ; as Rudra he is maleficient and as Śiva beneficient ; as Rudra he is full of poison and toxins or bad odours ; as Śiva he is full of immortality and sweet scent (*sugandhi*). It is the law of nature that when the body is full of toxins and putrefying substances of foreign matter the tissues suffer emaciation, but when the body is pure and free from toxins, the prāṇic energy becomes the ornament of bodily health (*pushṭi-vardhana*). If the law of *sugandhi*, that is, sweet scent generated from the secretions in the body retains its normal functioning this contributes to the health and growth of the tissues and bones ; the reverse of it leads to the decay of the tissues and physical emaciation. This is the *mṛityuṁjaya* or death-conquering basis of life after which the Tryambaka God and his mantra (RV. 7.59.12) are both known as *mṛityuṁjaya*. This simple but essential physiological law has been highly eulogised in the Indian religious literature and cult ; and the mantra is ceremoniously recited. The main emphasis is on the two opposite principles of Death and Immortality as the prayer is in the second line of the stanza : " May I be released from death and not from immortality." (RV. 7.59.12). The human body is com-

pared to a cucumbar which separates from its stem as if from the decaying elements of death, but the difference is that the human body is linked with the vital air of prāṇic energy that is in the universal and therefore enjoys immortality up to the end of its days or while the life-principle lasts for him. The great value of the threefold prāṇa functioning in matter, that is, of the Tryambaka god, Mahādeva or Agni, was clearly realised in Vedic times and expressed in the symbolism of Śiva as the Three-Eyed God who controls both immortality and death. The Three Mothers in the conception of Tryambaka Rudra are ingeniously explained in the *Brahma Purāṇa* (2.9.4), but quite in keeping with the ancient Vedic and Brāhmaṇic tradition that they typify the three metres or rhythms of Gāyatrī, Trishṭubh and Jagatī. These three metres are also styled as the three birds (*suparṇas*) that measure out their flights in the space between Heaven and Earth. This was the ancient Tri-suparṇa doctrine which the Purāṇa writer explains with the *tryambaka vidyā* or the symbolism of the Three-Eyed God. The three birds are the three Suparṇas of the *Ṛig Veda* and there is no prāṇic centre which is bereft of them in the form of *prāṇa*, *apāna* and *vyāna*. The Three Metres, the Three Birds and the Three Prāṇas all point to the common basic rhythm that is manifesting in each moment of life as in-breath and out-breath and their intermediate point. It is indeed difficult to exhaust the manifold formulations of the tripartite principle symbolised as Tryambaka Rudra-Śiva.

CHAPTER XI

Ashṭamūrti Śiva (*The Great God With Eight Forms*)

A significant epithet of God Śiva is *Ashṭamūrti* denoting that the great god has eight forms both in his cosmic manifestation and on the individual level. The word *ashṭamūrti* is well known in classical literature and Kālidāsa has made a specific reference to it (*Raghuvaṁśa* 2.35). In the opening verse of his drama *Mālavikāgnimitra* he says that god Śiva upholds the entire creation by means of his eight forms. In the invocation to his other drama *Abhijñāna-Śākuntala* the poet has made explicit mention of the eight manifest forms (*pratyaksha tanu*) of Śiva as follows : 1. *Water* (*Yā srishṭiḥ srashṭurādyā*) that which is the primeval creation of the creator. The waters are conceived of as the Mothers of the cosmos which were fecundated by the germ of Prajāpati. This seed was Agni which is spoken of as the son of the waters. This points to the Water and the Fire as the two primordial principles which produce the manifest creation. Here the waters are therefore conceived of as one of the eight forms of Śiva. In Vedic cosmogony, *Āpaḥ*, *Salimam*, *Samudraḥ* all signifying waters are conceived of as the first cause of creation and Agni generated from them by the tectonic or world-building forces is known as *Apāṁ-napāt* "the scion of waters".

2. *Fire* or the principle of heat (Agni). The poet refers to it as the bearer of oblations offered in the sacrifices (*vahati vidhihutaṁ yā haviḥ*). Fire is conceived of as being kindled in the furnace of the creator in the very beginning when he, like Vulcan, proceeded to smelt matter and fashion all forms. This is one of the five gross material elements spoken of as one of the eight forms of Śiva.

3. *Earth* who is the mother of all seeds which are but modifications of its potential generative power (*sarva-bīja-prakṛitiḥ*). According to Vedic cosmogony the seed hides within its womb all the possibilities of creation or manifestation of a particular species and is conceived of as the concrete form of Fire and Water. When the same is deposited within the earth it gets decomposed and sprouts up again from the womb of the Mother. In plain words, the youngest sprout is the modified form of the original seed by the potency of the principle of motherhood that is in the womb of the earth.

4. *Air*. The manifest symbol of life is breath or vital air that is but a fraction of the universal air termed PRĀṆA. This is also reckoned as one of the five elements, due to the presence of the vital air (*prāṇa*) amongst living creatures (*prāṇins*). Prāṇa is conceived of as one which is the universal and undifferentiated principle of life. In its manifest form in the material body, it is conceived of as two, namely the in-breath (*prāṇa*) and the out-breath (*apāna*) ; or as three, including *vyāna* or the middlemost stable principle against which the two polar forces collide and maintain a balance between them. It is constantly subject to the impact of the two clashing rocks, namely the in-breath and the out-breath

which constitute the vital person. In its still greater differentiation the single prāṇa is spoken of as having five or even ten divisions and for the matter of that there is a prāṇic centre in each organ, limb, tissue or gland, or even ineach and every cell of the human body. There is an independent prāṇic vibration; all of them are integrated and function under the controlling power of the single prāṇa or vital air. In the Vedic terminology, this basic or central prāṇa enkindles within the body or the material sheath and has the variant names like Agni, Vāyu and Āditya or Indra which represent the diverse forms of the single life-principle. In the Upanishads, Air (Vāyu) is spoken of as manifest Brahman (*pratyakshaṁ Brahma*).

5. *Space* (Ākāśa). This refers to the most subtle of the five gross elements, the all-pervading ākāśa having *śabda* or sound as its attribute. It is well known that in Hindu philosophy matter or the material world is said to be comprised of five elements (*pañchabhūtas*). The above list of the five forms of Śiva is equivalent to the physical or material body, that is, the indispensable outer sheath of prāṇa or the life-principle. In religious terminology these five forms of Śiva corresponding to the five elements are also known as *pañcha-Brahma* which form the source of the five organs of sense, the five organs of action and the five *tanmātrās* or qualitative emanations of matter styled as Sound, Touch, Form, Taste and Odour. In short, the whole intricate system of the material world in its outer form and inner functioning is regulated by the pañcha-Brahma or five elemental forms of Śiva.

The remaining three of the eight forms are as follows : 6-7. Under this head are reckoned the Sun and the Moon, referred to as the twin makers of Time, that is, the dual tensional force of heat and cold that makes the Time-Wheel revolve. The Sun and the Moon are but symbols created by nature in her design of the cosmos for the two opposite principles of a single rhythm expressed as negative and positive, or light and heat, or heat and cold, or blue and red, etc. This dual polarity is basic to all movement that is seen in the cosmos. The sun and the moon are said to be represented in the human centre as the Right and Left Cords (*piṅgalā* and *iḍā*) which form part of the central nervous system and are arranged on the two sides of the spinal canal. In short, they are but joint symbols of a single prāṇic energy functioning as *prāṇa* and *apāna*.

8. The last or eighth *mūrti* or form of Śiva is variously named as the Sacrificer (*Yajamāna*), the Initiated Priest (*Dīkshita-brāhmaṇa*), Giver of Libation (*Hotṛi*). This, in fact, represents the principle of Mind (*Manas*) which is the explanation of Yajamāna and of Brāhmaṇa in the Vedic literature ; for example, according to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* Mind is Yajamāna (*mano ha yajamānasya rūpam*, ŚB. 12.8.2.4), and Mind again is said to be the Brāhmaṇa or superintending priest of the sacrifice (*mano ha vai yajñasya brahma*, ŚB. 14.6.1.7).

The above eight forms are clearly divisible into three categories as follows : I. Five gross elements of Matter (*bhūta-mātrā*). II. Sun and Moon symbolising *prāṇa* and *apāna*, that is, the hot and cold aspects of a single vital power (*prāṇa-mātrā*). III. Yajamāna or Brāhmaṇa or priest of the bodily sacrifice which is the same as the principle of Mind (*manas*) or consciousness (*prajñā-mātrā*).

In fact, Śiva in his absolute form is One, but in his differentiated form he becomes *Trimūrti*, that is, the possessor of the Triple Form and the Trimūrti is conceived of as Ashṭamūrti, the owner of Eight Forms.

This arithmetical formulation is simple enough. It is based on the triadic principle, namely Mind, Life and Matter, that is, the unified composite form of the physical, vital and psychical persons which is the pattern of each individual. In this scheme the vital person composed of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, that is, the in-breath and out-breath, is reckoned as two. Similarly the physical person constituted by the five gross elements of matter (*pañcha-bhūtas*) is counted as having five forms. That is how the three basic forms of the Three-Eyed God Śiva, Wielder of the Trident, are at the same time spoken of as Ashṭamūrti, i. e., Eight Forms.

The Yajamāna is the focal centre round whom the sacrifice is organised. Similarly, Mind or *Manas* is the primary principle, spoken of as the first-born of the cosmic order. According to the *Ṛig Veda* Mind comes first into existence and Desire is the seed of the Mind through which it justifies itself (*kāmas tadagre samavartatādhi manaso retaḥ prathamaṁ yadāsīt*, RV. 10.129.4). The mind forms the individuating centre in the lap of the universal and thus commences the individual yajña. It is the primary principle to take root in the process of manifestation from which every thing else sprouts.

The Purāṇas further explain that the Self (Ātman), by which they mean the Mind, is the eighth form of Śiva also known by several different names as Yajamāna the Sacrificer, and Dīkshita Brāhmaṇa, that is, the initiated priest who takes the vow of complete sacrifice.

The above eight forms centring around Mind, Life and Matter are essential for the manifestation of the life-principle in the material body. This was rooted in Vedic thought and much elaborated in the Brāhmaṇas under the title of the Eight Vasus and Kumāra Vidyā respectively. In the Vedas these Eight Forms correspond to the Eight Vasus. The question is raised, Why are they called Vasus ? To this the answer is that the whole world with all its individual living creatures takes visible form through the agency of the Vasus, and hence the latter are so named[33]. *Idaṁ sarvam* of this passage means the created cosmos, within " This All." " This All " includes both the universal and the individual and both of them are comprised amongst the Eight Vasus. What these Eight Vasus are is counted in the same passage which includes the name of the Five Elements, Sun and Moon and the eighth one is named Nakshatra which is literally "not-kshatra," that is, Brahman or Brāhmaṇa (ŚB. 11.6.3.6). In another passage, Brahman is said to be the twenty-eighth principle amongst the Nakshatras (TB. 1.5.3.4).

We have just referred to the lore of the Miraculous Boy. The idea was that in each organism where Life becomes manifest there resides a Miraculous Babe which is just a poetical epithet for the central Vital Air (*ayaṁ vāva śiśur yoyaṁ madhyamaḥ prāṇaḥ*, B.U. 2.2.1). The pulsation of Life is conceived of as the awakening of this Wonderful Child which is called *chitra śiśuḥ* in the *Ṛig Veda* (RV. 10.1.2). When this child awakes, that is the Life-principle becoming active, it is afflicted with hunger or begins to cry for food which is practically described as its crying or weeping (*rodana*, ŚB. 6.3.1.10). This child is the same as Agni which because of his crying for food is given the epithet *Rudra*, etymologically explained as *yadarodīt tasmād rudraḥ*, that is, he was called Rudra becuase his hunger for food made him cry. The desire of Agni for Soma and the crying of the child for food are taken to be of identical nature. Both become quiet when satiated but that is only temporary for a few hours, and the need for food returns again and again so long as life lasts.

Agni or the Fire Principle is the Vedic epithet of the Life Principle.[34] In many passages the same is identified with Rudra.[4] Agni as incarnation in each individual centre is the great principle of Life. It is compared to the reception of a guest in the household. As soon as Life appears it starts its rhythmic functioning according to the important law of expansion and contraction as clearly defined in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*prāṇo vai samañchanaprasāraṇam*, ŚB. 8.1.1.4.10, VS. 27.45). This life pulsation traverses through eight modalities or manifests itself in eight stages to complete its full integrated functioning on the three levels of Mind, Life and Matter in which Life or Prāṇa is counted as twofold and Matter or the *pañchabhūtas* as fivefold. This simple fact of eightfold pulsation is put in the Brāhmaṇas in a rather obscure style saying that the sleeping babe, Rudra, was awakened and began to cry for a name to be given to it, and it cried eight times so that eight names or eight different appellations were given to it as follows : (1) Rudra (2) Śarva (3) Paśupati (4) Ugra (5) Aśani (6) Bhava (7) Mahādeva (8) Īśāna (*tānyetāni ashṭau Agni-rūpāṇi, Kumāro navamaḥ*, ŚB. 6.1.3.18.).

This was the ancient doctrine of the Birth of Kumāra (*Kumāra vidyā*) which was much elaborated in the Purāṇas (e. g. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 52.3-9).

For the sake of clarity this doctrine may be tabulated as follows :

I. Matter (*bhūtamātrā*)	II. Life (*prāṇamātrā*)	III. Mind (*prajñāmātrā* or consciousness)
The five gross elements :		
1. Earth : *Pṛithivīmūrti*; is named Śarva and also Sadyojāta.	1. *Prāṇa* (heat) : *Sūryamūrti* ; called Īśāna.	*Yajamānamūrti* ; called Hotṛi, Paśupati, Dīkshita Brāhmaṇa or Brahmā.
2. Water : *Jalamūrti* ; is named Bhava and also Vāmadeva.	2. *Apāna* (cold) : *Chandramūrti*; called Mahādeva.	
3. Fire : *Agnimūrti* ; is called also Aghora.		
4. Air : *Vāyumūrti* ; is called also Ugra and Tatpurusha.		



5. Ether : *Ākāśamūrti* ; is called Bhīma and also Aśani. (These are the five faces of Śiva according to the Purāṇas and cult worship).

It will be seen that there is a slight variation in the eight names given in the ŚB. and in the list of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. Seven are common to both the lists excepting Bhīma of the Purāṇa corresponding to Aśani (thunderbolt) of ŚB. but both mean practically the same thing.

In this exposition the first five are the gross material elements, the next two the polarity of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, and the last one stands for mind or consciousness. These three principles constitute manifested life in each organism as stated in the ŚB. 14.4.3.10, "*etan mayo vā ayam ātmā vāṅmayo manomayaḥ prāṇa-mayaḥ*". Of these three the *vāṅmaya* is the same as *bhūta-maya*, for the simple reason that *vāk*, speech or sound is the attribute of *ākāśa* which being the most subtle of the five material elements was accepted as the symbol of matter. What in modern terms we understand as Matter, Life and Mind correspond to these three major forms of Śiva-Rudra. All bodies with organised life are constituted of the Five Elements of Matter energised by the dual vital forces of *prāṇa* and *apāna*, and illumined by the principle of Mind or Consciousness. It is to be remembered that the Mind is said to be twofold, namely the Higher Mind more akin to the divine reality called Vijñāna, and the Lower Mind called Prajñāna which is engrossed in Matter. These three basic entities coalesced into one are like the three cities (*tripura*) pierced by a single shaft of Rudra and make up his manifest eightfold form as Ashṭamūrti. These have also been conceived as the Three Eyes of the Great God or as Three Mothers or generative potencies which give birth to Mind, Life and Matter and constantly suckle or sustain them with their heavenly milk. Rudra, therefore, was named *Tryambaka* in which the word *ambaka* has both the meaning of an eye or a mother. If this concept is further elaborated, it leads to the triadic formulation of the cosmos in the form of the Three Gods (Brahmā, Vishṇu and Rudra), Three Sacrificial Fires, Three Vedas and the Three Guṇas (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) of philosophy, and also the three Mātrās of Oṁkāra corresponding to the three states of consciousness. Each one of these three potencies is called a *Mātrā* or Measure because in the individual body they are all functioning in a single maṇḍala according to their predetermined measure. But in the universal they are infinite and beyond any measure and known by the Vedic name of *Sāhasrī*, there being Three Myriads (*tredhā sahasram*) or three infinities (RV. 1.69.8) whose composite form incarnates in each individual centre of life. The Three Infinities are the infinity of Mind (*veda-sāhasrī*), the infinity of Life (*loka-sāhasrī* or *prāṇa-sāhasrī*), and the infinity of Matter (*vāk-sāhasrī* or *bhūta-sāhasrī*); these are the Three Eyes or the Three Mothers (*Tryambaka*) essential for the complete manifestation or generation of each individual centre of life.

These three, as we have pointed out above, make up the Eight Forms of Śiva and their co-existence, coalescence or mysterious mingling leads to the emergence of life, which is mystically named as Kumāra or the New-born Babe (*kumāro navamaḥ*), where the word *navamaḥ* has two meanings, namely, "novel" and "recurrent" as the number Nine in the repeated series of numerations. Each unit of the Eight Forms of energy (*ashṭāpadī*) must invariably be transformed into *nava-padī*, i.e., the Eight-footed must become Nine-footed. This is also called the Thrice Three stock-piling of Fire (*trivrit stoma* of Agni). It is the central vital Air (*madhya-prāṇa*) that is spoken of as the Babe or Kumāra (*ayaṁ vāva śiśur yoyaṁ madhyamaḥ prāṇaḥ*) as clearly stated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (14.5.2.2).

The central nervous system or the spinal column is the post or pillar of sacrifice (*sthūṇā*) to which this Babe as the Life-principle is fastened by means of a rope that is the Food (*annaṁ dāma*). So it is said that when the New-born Babe or Rudra began to cry the gods understood this intimation and offered food to keep it alive. Without Food the god takes a terrific form (*annaṁ sambharāma*). This drama of the Eater of the Food (*annāda*) who is Agni or Rudra and his appeasement by being fed with Food continues throughout life.

In the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas Śiva is spoken of as *Śarabha* (Āraṇyakaparvan 34.14, Śāntiparvan 117.41-42), a fabulous animal more puissant than an elephant, a lion, a leopard or a tiger

and said to have eight feet, four as usual and four on the back projecting towards the sky (*Utpādaka*). Such an animal does not exist in nature, but is a symbolical conception (as given by the author of the *Śabda-kalpadruma* on the authority of the *Kālikā Purāṇa*). The eight forms of Śiva are the Eight Feet of his Śarabha incarnation. Of the Eight Forms of Śiva there are two clear divisions as follows : *A.* Earthly or Material including Earth, Water, Fire and Air *B.* Celestial or Heavenly including Ether (Ākāśa), Prāṇa, Apāna and Mind. The material four feet are visible, but the Celestial Four are invisible and just to be imagined. The first four forms are gross and are visible in manifest creation, and the next four are subtle and point to the invisible source of manifestation. As in the *Ṛig Veda* and the Upanishads, the Upper and the Lower (*ūrdhvam* and *adhaḥ*) are not spatial conceptions but relative levels of reference where *ūrdhvam* denotes the abstract and secret, and *adhaḥ* the material visible extension of the world. The *Gītā* speaks of the Cosmic Tree as having its roots above and branches below where *ūrdhvaṁ* means the Centre or Divine Reality and *adhaḥ* signifies the peripheral extension of the material world.

In cult worship the great Śaiva teachers of the Pāśupata school translated the Ashṭamūrti doctrine into the *Ashṭa-pushpikā* ritual, that is, worshipping Śiva by offering eight handfuls of flowers and thereby meditating on the glory of the Eight Forms of the Great God Bāṇabhaṭṭa actually refers to the worship of and meditation on Śiva by the Ashṭa-pushpikā method in which the Five Elements of matter, also called *pañcha-brahma* (or the Five Majesties of gross matter), Sun and Moon and Mind as the Yajamāna or Sacrificer were invoked or meditated upon as the Eight Forms of Śiva Mahādeva (*Harshacharita*, Book I).

The *Liṅga Purāṇa* (II. 13-17 and 26-27) elaborates the Ashtamūrti doctrine as an item of the faith of the Pāśupata teachers and enumerates the Eight Forms as Śarva, Bhava, Paśupati, Īśāna, Bhīma Rudra, Mahādeva and Ugra, in which there is a slight transposition of the order as compared with that of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* list. Kālidāsa agrees with the version of the *Liṅga Purāṇa* in placing Ugra at the end of the list and speaking of it as the form of Mind or Consciousness (*Chaitanyam-Ugrādiva dikshitena, Raghuvaṁśa* 5.4). Elsewhere also the great poet makes specific reference to the Eight Forms of Śiva, e.g., in the initial verse of the two dramas *Mālavikāgnimitra* and *Śākuntala* and in the epic poem *Kumārasambhava* (I. 57.). This reckoning of the Eight Names and Eight Forms of Śiva is also met with in the other Purāṇas, e.g., *Śiva Purāṇa* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* and also in the *Nāṭyaśāstra* of Bharata which shows that it was quite a popular doctrine in Śaiva philosophy and religion during the Golden Age of Gupta civilisation. The tradition was handed down from the *Ṛig Veda* to Purāṇic Hinduism and stands as a good example of the continuity of the basic religious concepts woven around the form of Rudra-Śiva, with new names under a changing terminology which was put forth with great clarity and perfect understanding of its meaning.

CHAPTER XII

God's Grace to the Ten-Headed Rāvaṇa

There is a legend in the *Atharva Veda* that a Brāhmaṇa was born in primeval times who had ten heads and ten faces.[34] This is evidently a symbolical description on the basis of which was elaborated the story of the Ten-Headed king of Laṅkā an island situated in the midst of the sea. He is portrayed as a demon who was conquered by Rāma a descendant of Manu and born in the Solar Dynasty. This Rāvaṇa is said to have been a great devotee of Śiva. He performed penances and the god was pleased and conferred on his devotee a boon that he would become invincible amongst all the gods and demons, but there would be an exception in the case of men. Rāvaṇa felt satisfied in elation of his strength that no harm would come to him from any human individual.

Rāvaṇa became arrogant of his power and challenged everybody and did not meet with his equal anywhere so he thought of trying his strength against the great god Mahādeva himself. He went to Kailāsa and saw that Śiva-Mahādeva and Pārvatī were seated on the mountain in a quiet and peaceful mood. Rāvaṇa felt scornful even of the Great Master who had conferred the boon of invincibility on

him and summoning all the might of his ten heads and twenty arms the giant king applied his elemental strength to throw the Kailāsa Mountain out of gear and disrupted its rocky foundation like an earthquake upheaval. Pārvatī became conscious of this trembling and screamed to her Lord for help. Śiva as the Stable God (*Sthāṇu*) had maintained his poise and balance both physically and mentally. He realised the mischief of Rāvaṇa and from the great reserve of power that was in him he just pressed the toe of his foot on the head of the demon which made him feel as one crushed and pulverised and all his pride smashed. Thereupon Rāvaṇa prayed to the Lord for mercy and he taking pity pardoned his insolence and exploit is known as Compassion towards Rāvaṇa (*Rāvaṇānugraha mūrti*).

This theme was given an iconographic form in Gupta sculpture and also described in the *Meghadūta* by Kālidāsa (fourth-fifth century A. D.). Later on it was more majestically rendered in the Kailāsa temple at Ellora (middle of the eighth century).

This beautiful story found in literature and art has its symbolical significances. The Ten-Headed Brāhmaṇa as Rāvaṇa represents the primeval impulse of Kāma or the God of Love whose seed of potency is Desire. It is the first emergence of the principle of Mind where Kāma is born and hence named *Manasija* (the Mind-born). According to the Vedic doctrine the whole creation proceeds from the mind of Prajāpati and is therefore described as Kāmapra-yajña, the Wish-fulfilling Sacrifice of the Creator. The seed of the cosmos is the thought of its Maker. The fact remains that Kāma or the creative impulse expressing itself as Sex is the most powerful and eternal impulse inherent in each centre of life and incarnating as the *animus* and *anima* or the male and the female. The Golden Egg of Creation by the process of auto-fission was transformed into male and female in its two halves. According to Indian philosophy Kāma is a god that has a divine nature essential for the scheme of creation but the same in its perverted form becomes the *libido* or a lowly desire for self-enjoyment (*vāsanā*).

This impulse is the Ten-Headed Giant depending on the five senses of perception and the five senses of action. Nature has endowed every human being with these ten organs of sense and action functioning with the help of the sensory and motory nerves but all having the root of their energy or power in the Mind. They are controlled by the five centres or plexus located in the spinal cord (*sushumṇā*) which is an extension of the brain. According to the Yogic and Tantric disciplines the *sushumṇā* signifies both the spinal canal or hollow tube filled with the cerebro-spinal fluid that empties itself in the brain vessels or ventricles and it is also the name of the goddess Kuṇḍalinī who is its subtle energy having the power of both thought and action. There are five divisions of the spinal canal in its ascent from the lowest centre to the brain as described in an earlier chapter and each ganglionic centre controls the efferent and afferent arcs and nerves of both perception and action (*jñāna* and *karma*) and ultimately links them with their highest centres in the brain which is the physical substratum of Mind. This physical structure in the human body with its external and internal, that is, physiological and psychological formation, was symbolised as the Ten-Headed Giant, Rāvaṇa, whose greatest weakness is Kāma or the Sex Impulse on account of which he loses the concentration of the mind and cries for satisfaction or makes each individual cry for appeasement from an external source. It may be compared with the crying of the Babe for food which confers on the prāṇic energy the appellation of Rudra. Rudra and Rāvaṇa are etymologically related concepts.

In the Psychical Person the Ten-Headed Rāvaṇa stalks like a giant striding all over the earth and throwing an insolent challenge to everyone which no one can resist and that is the meaning of the all round victory of Rāvaṇa. He is described as the King of Laṅkā, a term in the Sanskrit language for the human bust where the spinal column and canal or the *sushumṇā* with all the subtle vibrations is located ; the ocean in the midst of which the island is situated is the ocean of Mind or the infinite lake where the waters of creation are stored. In the midst of this great reservoir at each point there is the island kingdom of Rāvaṇa or the Principle of Individuality with all its inherent impulses under the general force of Kāma.

Mind has its two aspects, namely the Lower Mind which moves in the wake of the senses ; this is symbolised as Rāvaṇa. There is, on the other hand, the Higher Mind in which the Light of the Self is reflected in a perfect manner and which therefore remains self-controlled and fixed in its own centre. The Lower Mind (*prajñāna*) is compared to the Moon which waxes and wanes and never has the same

form or light. The Higher Mind (*vijñāna*) is compared to the Sun which is of uniform radiance and is stable and eternal and whose light is reflected in the Moon. These are psychological phenomena given a religious garb ; the Sun and the Moon are also the names of the two ear-rings, *kuṇḍala*, worn by the Śaiva yogins who practise yoga and samādhi and adore Śiva as their highest teacher (*ādi-guru*). In the symbolism of the story we may regard Rāma and Rāvaṇa representing the power of Sūrya or Fire on the one hand and of the Waters on the other. The two maṇḍalas of Fire and Water are inherent in the constitution of each individual having, so to say, a common centre like two concentric circles and it is always a question of the one controlling the other. The development of the higher psychic powers depends on the perfect working of the Higher Mind over the Lower, or the balanced harmony of the two.

Kailāsa represents the higher centres of Mind where Śiva and Pārvatī remain in permanent union. It is the place of perfection of the Kuṇḍalinī Yoga, that is, the great Serpent Power embracing the body of the Lord and converting its poison into ambrosial drops by the influence of the Moon which is the eternal fountain of *amṛitam* or Immortality or Death-conquering Illumination conceived as a feature of Śiva's head. Kailāsa and Himālaya are the two mountains placed in juxtaposition, the latter referring to the whole human body and the former being just a portion of the great mountain of snow where Lord Śiva or the Great God of Consciousness resides. Goddess Pārvatī has been so named because she represents the energy of the whole body in the form of the Daughter of the Mountain (*parvata-rāja putrī*). She desired a wedding with the Lord of the Kailāsa Mountain and finally by the power of her austerities gets united with Śiva on his abode of Kailāsa. Rāvaṇa in his foolish pride thinks that he can disturb the concentration of Śiva seated on Kailāsa with his consort Pārvatī, but Śiva has lifted himself above all temptations of sense by virtue of his conquering of the God of Love. All the impulses and desires have been subordianted by him as happens in a yogin who has attained samādhi. Rāvaṇa, therefore, meets his discomfiture and realises the power of Śiva as Yogeśvara or Lord of Yoga. The safe existence of Rāvaṇa in the world depends on the mercy of the Great God.

CHAPTER XIII

Eleven Rudras (Ekādaśa Rudra)

In the Vedas, Rudra is conceived as One-Without-A-Second (*eko rudro na dvitīyāya tasthau*). But there was also the conception of the numerous Rudras reckoned as eleven or hundreds or thousands or beyond all numbers. In his absolute form Rudra is the supreme reality and undifferentiated and therefore spoken of as One ; but in his immanent form as manifested in the world he is counted as eleven or more, not subject to computation. The various forms of Rudra in the Sixteenth Book of the *Yajur Veda* are reckoned as one hundred, because of which the title *śata-rudriya* was given to that particular invocation. But we actually find that the number of names to whom adoration is offered is many more than one hundred. When the author was composing that stotra he meditated on the glory of Rudra in his numerous forms both on the universal and the human planes and coined as many epithets as he could for the sake of offering his homage by using the word *namaḥ*. Thus the "Śatarudriya" is the first *namaḥ-stotra* in Sanskrit literature on the model of which many more were subsequently composed. The secret of these names is that the supreme power of Rudra is taking diversified forms in manifestation and each one of them deserves honorific rememberance and obeisance; for example, the rich and the poor, the good and the evil, the old and the young, the male and the female, the animate and the inamimate, the architects and the craftsmen, the dwarfs and the giants, the army and its leaders—divine and the human, the spiritual and the temporal—all are different forms of one and the same Rudra and one can never count their total number as we find them in society or in human imagination. For the sake of religion and philosophy it was from this point of view that the word " hundred " was prefixed to the name Rudra with reference to human institutions, and again the number "thousand" was prefixed with reference to the universal or divine creation. In the *Yajur Veda* itself (Book XVI, mantra 54), it is stated

that the Rudras on earth, in the intermediate regions and in heaven are thousands in number and cannot be counted (*asaṅkhyātāḥ sahasrāṇi*).

In Sanskrit literature we find a different list of the thousand names of Rudra-Śiva (*Śiva-sahasranāma stotra*) one by Taṇḍin (*Anuśāsana Parvan* 17.31-153 ; same as *Liṅga Purāṇa* 65.54-168) ; a second by Vena (*Vāmana Purāṇa* 47.62-162 ; same as that ascribed to Daksha, *Vāyu Purāṇa* 30.181-280 ; also borrowed in the *Brahma Purāṇa* 40.1-100 and in the *Śānti Parvan*, chapter 284) ; there is a third recited by Vishnu (*Liṅga Purāṇa* 98.27-159).

The compilation of a thousandfold invocation was an arduous task which must have involved the author in a prolonged concentrated study of the Vedic and classical literature for extracting an extensive list of epithets and strings of names that were later on carefully sifted and arranged in the form of the *sahasranāma stotra*. The technique was to take one epithet for each of the thousandfold aspects of Śiva which were coeval with the multiple diversity of creation.

A stotra was conceived as a *vāg-yajña* (*Śānti Parvan* 47.63), that is, a sacrifice performed through speech. It was considered as efficacious as the chanting of mantras in the yajña. The Transcendent or Infinite Speech was spoken of in the *Ṛig Veda* as Thousand-syllabled (RV. 1.164.43), and this was translated in classical Sanskrit as a *sahasranāma stotra*. It was like the offering of a garland of a thousand lotuses to the deity (*puṇḍarīka-sahasra-divya-mālā*). Just as the deity was worshipped by the offering of a thousand flowers, or lustration with a thousand lamps, or consecration with a thousand jars of water, milk or clarified butter, similarly the motif of his invocation by reciting a thousand names was evolved during the Gupta period. The underlying idea was that the deity is one, but for the full manifestation of his splendour, his one self multiplies a thousandfold. Each name in the stotra is like a ray of the divine sun or a form of the deity concretised as word (*nāma*), based on the numerous worldly manifestations (*rūpa*).

The nature of Rudra is twofold, namely terrific (*ghora*) and quiet (*śānta*). In his Rudra or terrible aspect the god is destructive and it is incumbent on every worshipper that he should understand the true glory of the Lord and recite his names in order to pacify his wrath and to convert the *śatarudriya* into a *śāntarudriya* (ŚB. 9.1.1.27). The wrathful god assumes the form of Bhairava and roams over the earth with the corpse of his consort Satī on his shoulder. But after his performing penances and meditation for a thousand years, the gods recited his stotra in his honour and he became pacified consenting to marry Pārvatī and the form of Umāmaheśvara is the Śānta or quiet form of Śiva worthy to be adored.

The conception of the Eleven Rudras was already developed in the *Ṛig Veda* together with that of Eight Vasus and Twelve Ādityas, plus Two Aśvins making up a team of thirty-three gods. These Thirty-three are integrated in their functioning like a wheel moving on its triple felly. The wheel of a car or chariot in India is made of wood and its rim has three pieces which are joined together. When the three are held together the wheel is complete and gets the power of movement. The same analogy is extended to the three hosts of gods or threefold divine powers, namely those of Mind, Life and Matter of which the composite form is Purusha or each centre of Life. These triple energies called devas are nothing else except the threefold manifestation of a single prāṇa. The Great Goddess of cosmic creation idealised as *parameshṭhinī vāk* or universal energy pervades the whole space between earth and heaven and is distinguished by movement (*saṁcharaṇa*) which is made possible by the working together of these three groups of deities named Vasus, Rudras and Ādityas. The group of All-Gods (*viśve deva*) form a common factor which gives leaven to all the three classes of gods.

Amongst these the Eight Vasus have been already explained as typical of the Eight Constituents of Matter or Prakṛiti. These are spoken of as the lower or inanimate form of Matter and cannot function or come into activity without the prāṇic principle or higher energy which is conceived of as three. The Eight Vasus and the Three Prāṇas together make up the number eleven and are spoken of as the Eleven Rudras. This explanation of Rudras is clearly given in the Upanishads that the Eleven Rudras are symbols of eleven prāṇic energies by which both the individual and the universal are made capable of their dynamic functioning. To this was applied the higher principle, namely that of Mind spoken of as Āditya which on the analogy of the twelve months of the year were supposed to be twelve. The two groups of the Rudras and Ādityas and of the Rudras and Vasus were held together by the

pair of Aśvins which symbolised the twofold rhythm of *prāṇa* and *apāna* and were like the linchpins used by joiners to keep the three pieces of the felly together. This imagery of the wheel symbolising the Thirty-three Gods was adopted quite early in the *Ṛig Veda* and has since influenced the conception of the Threefold Deities in its development and subsequent religion and metaphysics. As the author of the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* explicitly mentions, these Eleven Rudras were explained as the Eleven Prāṇas, namely the Central Prāṇa and its ten differentiated forms as the psychical and physiological energies of perception and action.[36]

The next elaboration of the Eleven Rudras is found in the Purāṇas where it is imagined that the infinite nature which is omniform (*viśvarūpā*) and wish-fulfilling (*kāmadughā*) is the daughter of Brahmā, named Surabhi, the Divine Milch Cow, who was the mother of the Eleven Rudras. Surabhi is the same as Aditi or Virāj, the Universal Cow in the *Ṛig Veda* (*Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* 1.3.49-52).

The *Liṅga Purāṇa* mentions that the Eleven Rudras were produced by Brahmā and it states with great clarity and emphasis that the Eleven Rudras are not different from the Eleven Prāṇic Vibrations of Brahmā as incarnating in all living creatures.[37]

The Purāṇas uniformly mention the old etymology of the name Rudra as derived from its crying, *rodana*, given in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* explained above under *Ashṭamūrti*.

The list of eleven names is met with in the several Purāṇas: in the *Matsya Purāṇa* the list is given twice (5.29-30 ; 153.90) ; *Liṅga Purāṇa* (1.82.40-41) ; *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* (1.3.49-52) ; *Bhavishya Purāṇa* (*Brahma-parva* 125.7) ; *Śiva Purāṇa* (*Vāyavīya saṁhitā* 12.25.30). The *Vāyu Purāṇa* speaks of millions of emanations of the Eleven Rudras and describes them as having the Vaiśvānara fire as their mouth, that is, in simple words all different forms of the single principle of Rudra-Agni. The *Matsya P.* refers to the Eleven Rudras as the mind-born sons of the Universal Cow, Surabhi, who created eighty-four crores of *gaṇas* or tutelary attendants of Rudra.

The above lists consist of variant names. Two of them, namely *Aja-ekapād* and *Ahirbudhnya* were known in the *Ṛig Veda* (RV. 10.66.11 ; 2.31.6). These two names are generally included in the Purāṇic lists.

Aja-ekapād literally means the one-footed goat, but *aja* also means the "unborn" and *ekapād* denotes the absence of movement for no motion is possible with a single foot. The unborn, transcendent Creator was symbolised as the "one-footed goat." The one foot symbolises the principle of Rest since motion is the quality of one who is two-footed. The one-footed goat which was the basis of symbolism is a real image in the repertoire of Indian showmen who make the goat stand on one leg by tying the other three legs together. *Ekapād* was synonymous with *apād*, the footless one, one bereft of locomotion. Thus *Aja-ekapād* as the first Rudra had reference to the transcendent unborn Creator referred to as Ekam (RV. 1.164.6), the One who is beyond the category of numbers like One Two Three . . . Infinity. It was therefore the view of the Vedic thinkers that the Unborn One is a mysterious something, beyond the power of speech or utterance and a unity which could not be divided. In the womb of this One all the gods were together and in its navel all things existed (RV. 10.82.6). In iconography *aja* or the goat is the animal of Agni and as the genius of Fire the unborn *aja* represented Agni-Prajāpati in its unmanifest form (*prajāpatiś charati garbhe antarajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate*).

Aja is the name of Prajāpati in his transcendental aspect. In the womb of Prajāpati as the unborn Aja exist all the worlds like spokes in the hub of a wheel. This aspect precedes all manifestations. In mathematical language all the forces exist in the centre and become operative against that substratum.

The name of the second Rudra out of eleven is Ahirbudhnya, literally the Dragon of the Deep. It is the same as Vṛitra, the Great Dragon which existed in the primeval ocean as an Asura that had monopolised all powers and forms within himself as stated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*sarvaṁ vṛitvā śiśye*, 1.1.3.4). The Deep Sea where the Dragon Ahi-Vṛitra lies concealed is the region of primeval darkness, which was the same as the abode of Varuṇa (*Ṛita-Sadana*), also named as the region of Dark Descent (*Kṛishṇa niyāna*, RV. 1.164.47). Here we have the two great principles of light and darkness respectively symbolised as Aja-ekapad and Ahirbudhnya. Agni or Indra, the genius of light and heat, remains in eternal conflict with the principle of cold or water. He subdues the power of Vṛitra and creates manifest forms. This is conceived of as the pattern of a battle between Indra and Vṛitra which was the

principal motif of the *Daivāsuram* conflict in the *Ṛig Veda*. These were the two fundamental principles of Fire and Water or Agni and Soma symbolised as the two primeval Rudras.

Virūpāksha. The third principle in the evolutionary process of creation named in the list of the Eleven Rudras is *Virūpāksha*, literally the eye that creates the differentiated forms. It is the same as saying that Indra by his intrinsic powers fashions diverse forms[38]. *Aksha* is the same as *chakshu* which is the symbol of the conscious world, that is the world of name and form. The word *virūpa* was also Vedic and applied to the differentiated prāṇic vibrations symbolised as the seven ṛishis of deep stirrings conceived of as the sons of Agni and the Seven Aṅgiras Sages (*virūpāsa idṛishyaḥ, ta ida gambhīravepasaḥ*, RV. 10.62.5).

Tvashṭā. In the *Ṛig Veda*, we have the conception of the god Tvashṭā who is here counted to be one of the Eleven Rudras. Tvashṭā is the fashioner of forms and the generator of living creatures.[39] The creation of different forms depends on the principle of differentiation symbolised as Tvashṭā the carpenter of the gods which in the list of the *Matsya Purāṇa* is given the corresponding name of *Bahurūpa*, i.e., having diversity of forms. The son of Tvashṭā was Viśvarūpa, also named Triśiras or the three-headed giant whose three heads are the threefold creation of Life, Mind and Matter.

Raivata. The next Rudra is named Raivata, after Revatī the presiding constellation of animals. This deity is Pūshan and Raivata signifies the principle of nourishment (*pūshā*) without which no animal form or life-principle can subsist.

Hara is the next Rudra, a counterpart to Raivata, literally that which takes away life and opposite of that which gives life and sustenance. In creation birth and death go together and that is why Raivata and Hara as the two forms of Rudra coexist as the twin principles of *amṛita* and *mṛityu*, immorat-lity and death, as stated in the *Ṛig Veda* (10.72.9). Aditi, mother of the gods, nursed Mārtāṇḍa or the Golden Egg to create the living forms within the two shores of life and death. It is said that the immortal gods alone cannot create life which implies the descent of prāṇa on the level of matter. It is therefore the Devas and the Bhūtas coming together that create visible forms.

Tryambaka, god of the Three Eyes. The Rudra named Tryambaka symbolises the various triads on which the entire cosmos in based. Symbolically the Three Eyes are the three principles of Sun, Moon and Fire or the Three States of Consciousness, *jāgrata*, *svapna*, and *sushupti* (waking state, dreaming state and dreamless sleep). The name Tryambaka also signifies the son of Three Mothers, Ambā, Ambikā and Ambālikā who are the Three Sisters or Divine Goddesses representing the triple vibrations of Mind, Life and Matter which become the Three Fires in the cosmic yajña.

Savitā. The Rudra called Savitā stands for the deity who symbolised the initial impelling of the forces that remain concealed in the transcendent centre and are symbolised as so many devas or divine powers as stated in the *Brāhmaṇas*. It is Savitā who produces the devas or impels them into activity. According to another explanation, Savitā is the principle of Mind which is the fountain-source of all perception and action (*mano vai savitā*). In the cosmos Savitā is the Sun, the source of light and heat which radiates power and gives movement. This Savitā is conceived of as the visible symbol of Brahman.

Jayanta and Aparājita. Jayanta as a Rudra represents the power of Indra and Aparājita of Vishṇu, who respectively symbolise the centrifugal and centripetal forces in each system of organic life. Move-ment away from the centre is Jayanta, the Victor, and that towards the centre is Aparājita, the Un-vanquished One. This is the idea of Indra and Vishṇu being in constant rivalry with each other and in this trial of strength, none triumphs or goes down. The victory is shared equally by both. This is clearly stated in the RV. 6.69.8. (*ubhā jigyatur na parājayethe*).

Pināki. Literally Pināki means the Great Bowman or wielder of the bow named Pināka. The Bowman is the Hunter, a form of Rudra,also called *mṛiga-vyādha* (*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 3.33), literally one who pierces the *mṛigas* or living creatures. Rudra as the Hunter is shooting his arrows in the form of smaller and bigger units of time. Each animal is in the grip of time and destiny to live his life for a limited period. The Bow represents by its straight rod the *axis mundi* of creation which is compared to the spinal column within the body. The straight bow can perform no action unless it is bent. The tension between the two ends of the straight rod depends on its curvature and that is the form of Rudra as Wielder of the Bow. His destructive power for shooting his arrows against the Animals (*paśus* or *mṛigas*) earns for

the Great God the title of Paśupati. Yāska explains Pināka as the stem of a rod like a straight plantain tree (*rambhaḥ pinākam iti daṇḍasya, Nirukta*).

The names of the Eleven Rudras as given above are based on the list of the *Matsya Purāṇa* (5.29-30). The *Liṅga* and *Bhavishya* give a slightly different list. The *Matsya* istelf defers substantially in the names given in the second list (153.19). However, taking one list as our basis we have explained the names as above.

It should be remembered that the Rudras whatever be their number are all different manifestations of Agni who as a god is said to possess the form of all other gods (*Agniḥ sarvā devatāḥ*). Agni as the supreme god is the son of Aditi, the universal Divine Mother or Infinite Nature, symbolised as a Cow called Virāj in the Vedas and Surabhi in the Purāṇas.*

The idea of Śiva as a Hunter who pierces all animals with his arrows was an ancient one and may be traced in two forms, namely Śiva as Paśupati, the Lord of Wild Animals, and as *Mṛigavyādha*. The meaning of Paśupati is clear, that is, the Lord who controls all animals. A figure on a seal found in the Indus Valley has made the idea of Paśupati so well known for in it we have the figure of a male person seated in *yogāsana* surrounded by four animals, namely a lion, an elephant, a bison and a unicorn. He has been identified as Śiva in his form as Paśupati who was well known in Vedic times. We have pointed out above that the conception of Śiva as the Hunter (*Mṛigavyādha*) was closely akin to that of Paśupati and had been developed in the time of the Brāhmaṇas. *Mṛiga* there means an animal and was a name of Agni. It is said that Agni, the God of Fire, hid himself under the cover of a skin and thus concealed his identity from the gods who were unable to find him until Śiva pierced him with his arrow. Thus *mriga* was the symbol of Agni and Agni was believed to be the same as Rudra who as the Great Hunter shoots his arrows in all directions and takes aim at all living creatures both to infuse life into them and put an end to it.

This ancient idea was given a new form in the Purāṇas when Śiva was spoken of as a *Kirāta*, namely Forester, or a Wild Huntsman subsisting by killing wild animals. There is a story in the *Mahābhārata* that Arjuna, one of the five Pāṇḍavas, went to the Himālayas to propitiate Śiva by his penances and there the God appeared before him in the garb of a Hunter or wild Kirāta entering into rivalry with his devotee for the prize of a wild boar at whom both took aim simultaneously. Ultimately Śiva became pleased with the fearless heart and prowess of Arjuna and he released to him the secret of his Pāśupata weapon by which the hero became invincible. This was casting an old idea into an epic mould and became the theme of a grand classical poem named *Kirātārjunīyam* of the poet Bhāravi.

Arjuna is typical of Man and Kirāta, that is, the Forester of the Universal Purusha, both of whom are friendly to each other and have fought it out between themselves for the sake of Varāha, a boar which is the symbol of *manyu* or agitated high spirit, that is a form of Rudra (*namaste rudra manyave, Yajur Veda* 16.1).

* The Eleven Rudras as the principles of prāṇa in its diversified forms are closely associated with the sacred Ekādaśī day or the eleventh day of the bright and dark halves of the month. It is enjoined that proper fasting should be observed on the Ekādadśī day to propitiate and worship the Eleven Rudras which in modern terms means the purifying of the metabolic fire and obtaining for it new strength by drying away the toxin and which voluntary fasting brings about. The chemistry and physiology of a regulated fast in the regimen of life are well known in modern science and they were equally well realised by the ancients who prescribed two fast days on the two Ekādaśī tithis (days) in each month. This creates a rhythm of prāṇic vibrations which is full of health and peace for body and mind.

CHAPTER XIV

The Drinking of Poison

The greatest exploit of Śiva was the Drinking of Poison which earned for him the title of Mahādeva, the Supreme God amongst all other gods. The myth of the Churning of the Ocean and the Drinking of Poison by Śiva is found in several Purāṇas. It is said that when the ocean was being churned jointly by the gods and the demons various jewels were produced like the Wish-fulfilling Tree (*Kalpa-vṛiksha*), the Wish-fulfilling Cow (*Kāmadhenu*), the Horse of Universal Fame (*Uchchaiḥśravas*), the Heavenly Elephant (*Airāvata*), etc. and then came out the deadly poison spreading its death-dealing fumes. The gods became terrified and none had the courage or power to withstand the effects of the poison, so they requested Śiva to drink the poison and save them from its effects. Śiva acceded to their request and by assimilating the poison within himself he earned the title of the Death-conquering God of Gods, *Mṛityuṁjaya Mahādeva*. Everyone felt happy and peaceful but Śiva immediately disappeared from the scene and retired to a cave in the Himālayas. The gods found him there and wanted to felicitate him for his great deed, but Śiva replied, "I have done nothing. Drinking of this gross poison is a small matter ; there is so much poison in the affairs of the world, and those who can drink that poison and maintain their balance are real heroes."

This explanation put in the mouth of Śiva himself in the version of the story given in the *Liṅga Purāṇa* is touching and significant. Indeed, both poison and nectar reside in the hearts of men and only when human souls are free from the former can they experience the joys of the latter. These are matters of daily experience in the affairs of men.

Each individual is an ocean (*purusho vai samudraḥ*, J. Up. B.). Mind is the flood of water in this ocean from which tidal waves are ceaselessly flowing. The mind is affected by both good and evil forces ; the former being ambrosial and the latter being deadly poison. He who can conquer the darkness of the evil ideas and maintain his balance and auspicious nature is a Śiva, the god who has attained mastery over death.

According to Vedic symbolism the whole world and each individual are constituted of the two principles of Fire and Water. The Lord of Water is Varuṇa who is the master of the Asuras and the Lord of Fire is Rudra-Śiva. Water symbolises the Asuras, Night, Darkness, Untruth and Cold. Fire symbolises Day, Light, Heat and Truth. As explained in the *Ṛig Veda* and the Brāhmaṇas, Agni is the same as Rudra and Agni stands for the metabolic Fire called Prāṇa which exists both in the individual centre and in the cosmos. This phenomenon of poison and nectar is experienced in our own bodies. We find that the poisonous matter loaded with many toxins flowing through the dark-coloured veins is drawn back to the heart which pumps it in the form of fresh scarlet blood. It is processed in the lungs by contact with oxygen or fresh air and reconverted into the life-giving stream and sent out to every one of the tissues and the minutest cells.

This drama of the two opposite forces conjointly maintaining health, strength and life is symbolically represented as the rhythm of poison and nectar functioning through each organ of the body. Agni as Vaiśvānara or the metabolic fire which digests food and controls the mysterious secretions is the same as Rudra-Śiva who alone has the power of drinking and purifying the poison.

This significant myth of Śiva and Poison is not a historical event which took place in some bygone age but it is an ever-recurrent phenomenon which is taking place on the three levels of Mind, Life and Matter in each individual centre. According to the divine scheme of creation the principle of Poison is always present in Matter or the five gross elements which make up our bodies. As soon as the pure mind existing on the divine plane comes into contact with Matter or descends to the level of the body it becomes soiled with dross in a greater or lesser degree. This requires to be constantly purified and this can only be done by the power of the Higher Mind presided over by Śiva who is the Controller of the Thousand-petalled Lotus which symbolises the highest subtlest centres of the Mind described in yoga as Kailāsa or the Mountain which is the abode of Śiva, Lord of Yoga.

Of the five gross elements of Matter (*pañchabhūtas*), *ākāśa* or ether is the most subtle and pervasive. Howsoever one may try one can never soil *ākāśa* with dirt or poison ; that is why it is said that Śiva fixed the Poison in his throat, which represents the outer *ākāśa*, in the inner constitution of the body and is the source of Sound or Speech which is a quality of *ākāśa*. In this manner Śiva did two things, namely (1) he assimilated Poison and (2) the nature of Poison itself was vindicated by not being allowed to affect other centres of the body where it would have proved fatal.

On the body of Śiva are coiled a number of snakes. The serpent according to Vedic symbolism represents Poison and Death. Śiva is the Great God who has attained the highest illumination of the Mind (*samādhi*) and this has earned for him the power which conquers Death and enables one to enter the Infinite Regions of Immortality. Although there are serpents coiled around the body of Śiva they cannot do any harm to him. Both Death and Immortality have found a place in the constitution of Śiva as in every individual human body and life-cell. It depends on his respective power whether or not an individual falls in the hands of Death or enjoys Immortality. It should be remembered that Śiva is known as Mahākāla, literally Great Time or the Supreme God of Death ; each moment or unit of Time is bestowing prolonged life and is also leading creatures nearer their end. So in Mahākāla Śiva we have the combined symbolism of Life and Death.

It may be noted that in the ancient Sanskrit terminology, Water has two synonyms amongst many, namely *amṛitam* which signifies the immortal principle and it also is called *visham* which stands for the principle of Death or Poison. Here we are confronted with the same symbolism of the two opposite principles of Life and its negation as existing in the Infinite Source from which the cosmos is produced. The balance between the two is the ideal attained in the body of Śiva.

According to the Vedic therapy all healing is effected by the potency of Water and therefore Rudra is called *jalāsha-bheshaja* (RV. 1.43.4 ; 2.33.7). The meaning of this epithet is clear, namely that the purity of Water or the secretions and saps flowing in the body through arteries and veins is the prime cause of health and life that is possible only by perfect elimination of toxin (*nirvishīkaraṇa*). This state of freedom from all kinds of toxin whether of the body or the mind is the condition of perfect yoga, that belongs to Śiva. In iconography this is represented as Rudra holding the cup of poison and drinking it with the power of Agni. This motif finds the earliest mention in the *Ṛig Veda* itself ; the deity of the long matted locks (*keśin*, i.e., Agni) drinks in the company of Rudra the cup of poison.[40] In fact, the cosmic waters are known as Soma and the same incarnates in the body in the form of secretions and fluids. Poison is the unpurified Soma which thwarts its immortal essence and therefore was styled as *Soma-paribādha* (RV. 1.43.8).

According to another conception there are two aspects of the Deity with matted locks ; he is known as Keśin in one aspect in which he has the form of Agni, and in another he is the carrier of poison (*keśyagniṁ keśīvisham*, RV. 10.136.1).

Based on the imagery of the Drinking of Poison which was fixed by the Great God in his throat, Śiva was given the epithet *Nīlakaṇṭha*, the Deity of the Blue Throat. This Blue Throat is Ākāśa which is visible to all and is the source of Sound or Speech that indeed is the Throat of the Lord and the fountainhead of the Thousand-syllabled Speech (*sahasrākshharā vāk*).

CHAPTER XV

Śiva as Gaṅgādhara

A choice epithet of Śiva is *Gaṅgādhara*, that is, he carries the thousandfold floods of the river Gaṅgā in his matted locks. This sacred river is said to have originally belonged to heaven and was the river of gods (*devanadī*). By invocation of King Bhagīratha this immortal river of heaven was allowed to come down to earth. There was no one who could bear the impact of the mighty descent, so the king performed penances and propitiated Śiva and received from him the approval that he would receive the heavenly floods on his head. So the river descended with such ponderous force as shook the earth and the heavens and threw the whole world in wonderment. But god Śiva seated in samādhi was left

unmoved and remained in as great equipoise as ever. The river Gaṅgā lost her way in the interminable masses of the locks of Śiva. This reminds us of his Vedic epithet *kapardin*, the God of Matted Locks. The matted locks symbolised the endless extension of the Five Gross Elements of Matter and it was believed that they are the emanations from the prāṇic centre of life that is Rudra or Agni. It is the law of nature that every such prāṇic centre, when it becomes active, assimilates food and in the process eliminates some refuse, or matter.

The same imagery was extended to Brahman by saying that he ate his food called *brahmaudana* and after doing so he created by his energy these worlds. That which is the Refuse is known as *Uchchhishṭa*, literally surplus, also called *Pravargya* or the portion that becomes detached from its life-centre. This phenomenon of Food and the Eater of Food or of Brahmaudana and Pravargya is present everywhere when prāṇa becomes active or starts its function by the twofold rhythm of expansion and contraction. The cosmos is the supreme manifestation of this rhythmic process of pulsation which is the basic characteristic of all energy. Therefore the Vedic thinkers defined Prāṇa as thythmic vibration emanating from the centre and once going out as the centrifugal force returns in a centripetal form (*prāṇo vai samañchana-prasāraṇam*, ŚB. 8.1.4.10).

They compared it to a giant bird, Suparṇa, flapping its wings on an eternal flight to a heavenly destination (VS. 27.45). This twofold rhythmic movement is graphically described as *etyai pretyai* (VS. 27.45), "for coming and going," that is, expanding and contracting, which completes the rhythm of each vibration. The Vedic terminology conceives of the creation in terms of this basic rhythm and expresses it by a diverse terminology. The same is the significance of *brahmaudana* and *pravargya*, that is, the Food and its Refuse ; the same law holds good for the functioning of each engine or machine which is propelled by energy on the basis of its material fuel.



The Tāṇḍava-dancer. From Ellora.

From this point of view a significant epithet for the ultimate source of creation is *Uchchhishṭa*, the "Surplus" which is the name of the supreme creator himself who himself remains beyond the limitations of space and time or cosmic manifestation and therefore was appropriately styled as the Surplus Brahma. He in Purāṇic terminology is symbolised as *Anantaśesha* the Cosmic Serpent which is the substratum and support of the finite cosmos. On the other hand looking to the infinite majesties of the Creator (*sahasradhā mahimānaḥ sahasram*, RV. 10.114.8), it is stated that Brahman and his creation are both coeval in space and time. The one extends as far in depths of space and time as the other.[41]

It is essential that the oscillating curve of energy should extend over a measured field in which the distances between the centre and periphery are regulated and equalised. Erratic dashing and darting is destructive whereas regulated movement is a building force and symbolised as the activity of yajña.

Gaṅgā symbolises the rhythmic flow of energy between Heaven and Earth or between the devas and the material manifestations. It is, in fact, the symbol of the great River of Life whose essential nature is movement ; the name Gaṅgā literally means the Flowing Channel which is like the river in flood, an irresistible flow.

Gaṅgā is the Purāṇic representative of the Vedic Sarasvatī. Whatever has been said about Sarasvatī in the Vedic mantras applies to Gaṅgā and with still greater glorification. Sarasvatī is described in the *Ṛig Veda* as the sacred river which sanctifies all that come into contact with her waters. She is also said to be the upholder of yajña and to purify the minds of all.[42] She takes her rise from a lake and therefore received the name of the River of the Lake (*sarasvatī*). This lake is the Universal Mind of the Creator (*brahma-saras*) symbolically identified as *mānasarovara*, the lake situated near the Mountain Kailāsa which is the abode of Śiva. Both Kailāsa and the Mānasa Lake are associated with the Mind. Sarasvatī is graphically described as the Great Flood issuing from that Lake and inundating with her waters the Three Worlds (*maho arṇaḥ sarasvatī .... dhiyo viśvā vi rājati*, RV. 1.3.12).

All the perennial stirrings of mind and soul and the eternal vibrations of the life-force were symbolised as Sarasvatī. All this is also the truth of the holy Gaṅgā on the head of Śiva. She is the giver of deliverance from the bonds of matter, the goddess that lifts men from the earthly morass to the ethereal heights of heaven, that is, from the pleasures of the senses to the ecstasy of the divine.

The story about the birth of Gaṅgā describes how King Bhagīratha brought her from the heavenly heights to the level of matter. This is a statement which besides having symbolical significance is also rooted in the truth of India's natural conditions of climate and rainfall. Bhagīratha is the symbol of Sūrya whose *bhaga* or divine radiance is moving his Mountain Chariot (*devaratha*) to which are yoked his seven rays as the Seven Horses and the Seasons. The revolving Wheel of Time, the growing plants and animals and all that exists in the form of energy in the solar system has its source in the central control, that is, in Sūrya. Rotation or movement was symbolised as a chariot and the Purāṇas elaborated it as a sublime idea in which the god Sūrya is said to move through the twelve months or the six seasons with the dynamic power of sevenfold forces hidden in the seven colours of his thousand rays. The seven colours found in the solar spectrum and visualised through a prism were known to the ancients under several names, namely the Seven Horses also described as the Seven Metres or rhythmic vibrations of different lengths (*saptāśva-rupāś-chhandāṁsi vahante vāyuraṁbasā*, *Matsya Purāṇa*).

There is also a more mythical conception of the sevenfold radiations of the sun symbolised as Deva, Ṛishi, Gandharva, Apsaras, Sarpa, Grāmaṇī, and Rākshasa. This heptad couchad in a very mythical form actually symbolises the octave of the sun based on the mutual difference of his rays. The differing wave-lengths is a modern conception of science, but the ancients had discovered that there are seven colours in each ray of the sun, and this is due to different tensions or forces which may be conceived as the seven archetypal distinctions, since it is essential that the One should become Seven for the sake of manifestation. The first three types are Deva, Ṛishi and Gandharva, and they represent Light and Immortality, or what in modern terms is known as the actinic portion of the spectrum. The last three, namely Sarpa, Grāmaṇī and Rākshasas signify heat or death-dealing vibrations equal to the thermal sphere of the spectrum. The Apsarasas stand in between the two. In simple words this octave of the seven mythical beings representing seven types or forces may be called the ancient Indian VIBGYOR.

This was the bow of Indra or of Rudra consisting of Light and Heat and therefore named as *nīla-lohita*, that is, the blue and red portions of the spectrum. The two are interdependent and knit together. (For a description of the Solar Chariot see *Matsya Purāṇa*, chapter 125, and the *Yajur Veda* 15.15-19).

Gaṅgā as the River of Life follows the wheels of this chariot which is but another name for the mighty solar radiation that fills the earth. This is also happening in the natural phenomena of the distribution of cold and heat during the six seasons in India and the consequent rainfall after the intense heat of the summer months.

In Indian religious tradition there are two festivals associated with the River Gaṅgā, namely the festival of her Birth, celebrated on the tenth bright day of the month of *Jyeshṭha* (June) and the festival of her Wedding, celebrated on the fifteenth bright day of *Kārttika*. The Birth festival is exactly the time when about the twentieth June, heavenly waters lifted by the solar rays are released to flow from the sky towards the earth in torrential rains of the Indian monsoon season. That is celebrated as *Gaṅgā Dashehrā*. Then the waters begin to rush towards the ocean and become turbid and the Gaṅgā is said to become *rajasvalā* or like an adolescent girl in her course. After four months the waters begin to clear and the wedding of the River Gaṅgā is celebrated on the fifteenth bright day of the month of *Kārttika*. The meaning is that Gaṅgā undergoes the same drama of birth and fecundity as the River of Life in all living creatures.

The purpose for which Gaṅgā as the River of Life came down from heaven of the gods to the world of mortal men was to convert the ashes of the sixty thousand sons of a king named Sagara into living creatures. Sagara was the ancestor of Bhagīratha who invoked the River Goddess Gaṅgā. It is said that by the touch of the waters of Gaṅgā the ashes were all changed into living beings or centres of life and went to heaven or the source from whence the Ganges had come.

The meaning of "sixty thousand" sons should be clearly understood. Here the number "sixty" stands for the principle of rotation produced by the thirty days and thirty nights which are the products of diurnal movement of the earth round its axis and simultaneously moving from month to month round the sun. The number sixty thousand is also symbolised as the sixty thousand Vālakhilyas who rush with the sun from morn till eve and their slow movement is the power of rotation which moves the solar chariot. They are sixty thousand in number, where sixty symbolises the pairs of days and nights and one thousand stands for the infinite transcendent poles of that power in the solar radiation. The name Vālakhilya is in itself significant referring to the solar rays which do not have between themselves hair's breadth (*vāla*) interspace (*khila*) as explained in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.[4]

The number one thousand symbolises the thousand or infinite rays of the sun. It is the interruption of the solar radiation with the units of time that makes the movement of the cosmic chariot of the sun possible. This twofold phenomenon is present in every individual centre of life that is linked to its universal source and thus the number sixty thousand is symbolical of each individual being who depends for the heavenly transformation of his material body on the rushing waters of the great River of Life that is Gaṅgā. Rudra-Śiva is the eternal divine support of that Gaṅgā. On his head both Soma as the principle of Mind (*Manas*) and Gaṅgā, the principle of vital Energy (*Prāṇa*) are supported with the eternal glory of the Lord.

CHAPTER XVI

BHASMA-DHĀRAṆA (*The Smearing of Ashes*)

Śiva is well known for smearing ashes on his body. All Śaiva Yogins and mendicants of the Pāśupata and other orders besmear their bodies with ashes and consider it as an essential feature of their devotion of Śiva. In some of the Purāṇas as the *Vāmana Purāṇa*, the smearing of ashes is much glorified. The question naturally arises as to whether there is any symbolical meaning behind this external form.

It is also said that the ashes in themselves are of a twofold nature. Firstly, either they are taken from the cemeteries or places of burning the dead bodies, i.e., from the funeral pyres in which the corpse has been cremated with heaps of fuel or wood. This is regarded as ideal or the best ashes. Kālidāsa has stated that the ashes from the cemeteries (*chitā-bhasma*) are in their very nature impure and that is also the general belief since they come from the burning of dead bodies. A dead body is the sign of the highest impurity. After touching the dead body or going to the burning place one must purify himself by taking bath. Even such impure ashes from the funeral pyre attains to purity by being rubbed on the body of Śiva. The same practice is followed by Śaiva Yogins and that is regarded by them as a mark of purification.

The other kind of ashes is that which is produced by burning the wooden sticks in the altar of the Yajña or more popularly from the burning of faggots by the Śaiva ascetics who light a fire in front of them or all round their seat in order to keep themselves warm in winter or as the sign of Tapas in the hot season. It is enjoined in the Śaiva texts and also has been an ancient practice that a devotee who desires to propitiate Śiva should himself sit in the middle and burn four fires round him in the four directions while he should be gazing with winkless eyes at the sun in heaven blazing as the fifth fire. This was known as *Pañchāgni-tāpana*, i.e., spiritual vulcanisation of the life-force in order to increase its health and purity and resistence to all disease. The ashes of the fire lighted for this purpose are to be rubbed on the body of the devotee and that is considered as highly efficacious leading to spiritual enlightenment.

The ashes are the five gross material elements (*Pañchabhūtas*) which are the constituents of our bodies. Rudra-Śiva represents the great principle of Prāṇa, i.e., the life-force in the universal and the individual. Prāṇa is invisible. But it becomes manifest in the sheaths of the body composed of the five elements. The body is a dead matter in itself but it becomes the holy altar of Yajña in which the prāṇic fires are ceaselessly enkindling throughout the session of life. It is explicitly stated in the Upani-

shads that the Prāṇic fires keep burning in this body; of them Apāna, the outer-breath is Gārhapatya; the Prāṇa or in-breath is the Āhavanīya; the central vital air or Vyāna is the Dakshiṇāgni (*Praśna Upanishad* 4.3).The human soul in the form of consciousness (*Vijñāna ātmā*) resides within this "City of Brahman" (Brahmapura) as a mysterious force whose true nature is unknown (*apūrva yaksha*) together with the five elements of matter (*bhūtāni*), all the gods or the immortal powers of heaven (Devas) and all the life forces (Prāṇa) produced by the coming together of the Devas and the Bhūtas. This is the miraculous constitution of the human body the divine sanctuary or holy tabernacle in which the great principles or Devas, Prāṇas and Bhūtas are being worshipped so long as they exist together. Their integration or divine coherence is seen as the composite form of the physical, vital and psychical persons which the Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads speak of as Vāṅmaya (*-Bhūtamaya*)-Purusha, Prāṇamaya-Purusha and Manomaya-Purusha respectively. (ŚB. 14.4.310). Physical body was also known as Śarīra, i.e., merely the material sheath, the vital body as Tejomaya, i.e., the sheath of fire and the psychical body as Amṛitamaya, i.e., the sheath of the immortal principle of mind, and this is verily the Person (Purusha) also called the Self (*Ātmā*), also the Immortal principle (*Amṛita*) and all this in essence is Brahman on the Adhyātma or individual plane.[43a]

The ashes thus symbolise the human body or bodies of all creatures formed of the Pañchabhūtas which is worthy of the highest respect so long as it is in contact with the life-principle. It is then styled as the Worshipful One (*Archanīya or Arka*). But as soon as Prāṇa leaves the body or life departs the body becomes impure and is consigned to the flames leaving a handful of ashes behind which is all that remains as the residue of matter that composed it. Thus the ashes or the physical sheath of the material body is essential for the manifestation of life in visible form. Bereft of Prāṇa or the life-force the bodv belongs truly to the cemetery and may be styled as *Chitā-bhasma* or the dust of the funeral pyre. But with the life-force rushing through the body the latter becomes the sheath of the divine in which all the powers of heaven and earth combine to produce a splendour that is rarely seen on earth or in heaven. The human body is a marvel whose mystery remains unknown for ever. It is the entry and exit of Prāṇa that holds the key to the understanding of its miraculous essence and function. The brain, the central nervous system, ganglionic masses and centres of forces, ductless glands with mysterious secretions, numerous organs and innumerable live cells, bones and tissues, gray and white matter, saps and secretions, vitality and mind—all these and numberless other powers of the human body are the visible outcome of the incarnation of the transcendent principle of life or the divine transcendence of Rudra-Śiva becoming manifest in the material universe or the material body. This is the meaning of the ashes smeared on the body of Śiva. It is a significant symbol of life and matter, or Prāṇa and Bhūtas existing together.

What is the source of Prāṇa, How it appears and How it disappears, What are its functionings, How it grows in health and How it declines—these are all mysteries to which no one knows the right answer. But one thing is certain that by the union of the two parents the divine life-force (Deva Prāṇa). takes the form of the combination of their seeds or the fertilised first cell which is essentially material and develops from the zygote to the foetus and is ultimately delivered from the mother's womb as the perfect babe. Thus the material and the vital sheaths are born to live together and the divine spark enshrined within the body kindles like fire in the sacrificial altar. The food sustains the life-force like the fuel sticks added to the flame in the altar. This analogy of Prāṇa within the body and fire in the altar is the bed-rock of Vedic symbolism. The body is verily the altar in which the complete ritual of Yajña is being performed. It is inevitable that the fuel burnt to sustain the fire leaves some ashes behind and similarly the food that is consumed leaves some portion as refuse to be rejected out of the body and also some portions which are assimilated to build the body. Both of these are like ashes of the prāṇic fires that accumulate and become concrete or visible as the individual body by the process of assimilation and elimination. This twofold process is essentially the same as the pulsation of the life-force or the rhythmic contraction and expansion of Prāṇa.

We also have two other epithets of Śiva, viz., *Kapardin and Kapālin*. *Kaparda* is the mass of matted locks and *Kapāla* is the human skull or head (*muṇḍa*) and both have reference to the material body or physical sheath in which the life-principle or Prāṇa is encased. The hair on the head and over the whole

body as a coat of wool are all produced as dead matter by the fiery energy that burns within the body. They are rejected as refuse by the functioning of a life-centre and hence Rudra-Śiva as the deity within the body is given the epithet of Keśin or Kapardin.

The human head or the garland of skulls (*muṇḍamālā*) worn by Śiva are nothing but symbols of dead matter enlivened by Prāṇa. The universal life-force is conceived of as thousand-headed, i.e., infinite number of heads or skulls. This is the true conception of Rudra-Śiva, the Great God as Prāṇa which has since the beginning of time worn a garland of numberless skulls and has the true iconographic form of Kapālin, i.e., the deity adorned by a human skull or becoming manifest in the form of a human head endowed with all the potentialities of mind, life and matter. The symbolism of the *Śiras* (Kapāla) was developed quite early in the Vedic literature where it is said, that the Head is the womb or source of all prāṇic vibrations (*śiro vai prāṇānāṁ yoniḥ*, ŚB. 7.5.1.22) and; that Life, Fire and Head, which are synonymous, are indicative of the same principle (*prāṇo'gniḥ śīrsham*, KB. 8.1); that Agni is the deity and Gāyatrī the rhythmic vibration or metre of the head (ŚB. 10.3.2.1).

It is also stated that during the embryonic stage the head appears first and the rest of the central nervous system of the body is formed later.[44] All the prāṇic centres in the whole body are connected with the head and all the secretions in the different limbs and parts of the body are mingled together and carried to the ventricular fluids of the brain (ŚB. 6.1.1.4). And since the Śrī or beauty of the body is centred in the head, the latter is etymologically known as *Śiraḥ*, or the abode of Śrī. The head was conceived as made of two Kapālas or portions, viz., the right and the left which typify the basic duality in the constitution of the individual life-centre; termed also as the right cord and the left cord or Prāṇa and Apāna, etc. (ŚB. 10.5.4.12, *dvi-kapālaṁ hi śiraḥ*).

Carrying the symbolism further, the head was spoken of as consisting of eight sherds (*ashṭa-kapālaṁ purushasya śiraḥ*, TB. 3.2.74). The number eight has reference to the eight Vasus or elements of manifestation of life consisting of the Pañchabhūtas, Prāṇa and Apāna and the principle of Mind (Manas) which holds all these together. In the ritual the cake offered to Agni was baked on eight pot-sherds (*ashṭa-kapāla-puroḍāśa*) and these symbolise the eight names and forms of Rudra-Śiva or Agni incarnating as Kumāra, the miraculous babe within the body.

CHAPTER XVII

Digambara or the Great Nude God

One of the basic metaphysical forms of Śiva is that of being the Great Nude God, Digambara Deva, literally he whose garment or covering is the four directions of space. The symbolism is rooted in the Vedic conception of Mahā Nagna the Great Nude (AV. 20.136.11), an epithet of the transcendent Purusha or Creator, and his infinite nature or the Prakṛiti styled as Mahā Nagnī the eternal Nude Woman. He the God with boundless space round him is on the move for ever, bestriding like a colossus between earth and heaven. His feet are planted on the rocky earth and his head with the crescent moon touching the immortal heavens and the matted locks spreading like an interminable forest up to the ends of the four directions. The Nude Goddess Mahā Nagnī pursues him (*dhāvantam anu dhāvati*) saying, " Eat this dish of boiled rice and sleep with me ". The whole imagery has been cast in an erotic mould, speaking the language of primeval ages when the God of Love, Kāma, appeared as the potent seed of the Creator's mind for the sake of cosmic generation. There was then no prudery of any kind but elemental agitation in which the creative impulses were released as a spring-tide flood inundating both the universal mind together with its infinite centres of individuation.

The nude woman and the nude man separated as the two halves of the golden egg, Hiraṇyāṇḍa (same as Hiraṇyagarbha), and they were attracted to each other for full coalescence in boundless loving affection as a climbing creeper embraces a tree. They are also compared to two inverted bowls forming interdependent wombs. Agni or Life-force was then addressed as : You are Man, you are Woman ! The man and the woman combine to assume the Ardhanārīśvara form of the Great God in which the half-male and the half-female, the *Animā* and the *Animus*, exist in deep intimacy as the two motifs of

eternal creativity. They live a life of dalliance experiencing the highest ecstasy or Ānandam, that is symbolised as the Nandī Bull or the joy-giving procreative seed.

The male and the female aspects of the Creator locked in eternal embrace in the father-mother pose (Yab-Yun of Tibetan Tantra=Skt. Yuganaddha) is the meaning of the Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva. In Vedic language it is the same as the fusion of Agni and Soma, Fire and Water, the two principles of heat and cold by which the world is brought into existence and held together. Each individual centre of life or prāṇic vibrations is said to be an *agnīshomīya paśu*. The animal fashioned is the most powerful vindication of the life-force or Prāṇa made concrete as flesh. In Śaiva iconography the Ardhanārīśvara image or the Nara-Nārī form of the deity is a great idea with patent meaning.

The implication of the term Digambara is that the space is the coat or covering of the God in his transcendental aspect; the whole philosophy of Clothes is inherent in the conception of nudity and covering. Absolute Purusha is nude and Prakṛiti or Nature is his covering. The five gross elements of matter form the cloth which becomes the covering of the principle of divine consciousness (*Chinmaya Purusha*). Of these five elements or Pañcha Mahābhūtas Ākāśa is the most subtle and pervasive and is accepted as the symbol of the five elements and the same is conceived of as the garment of the undraped God. It is the same as the physical body which forms a sheath of Prāṇa or the life-principle. When Śiva begins his cosmic dance or the prāṇic realities start their pulsating movements he needs to have a canopy on his head; the same has been described as the elephant's skin or the hide of the elephant demon (Gajāsura) who was freshly slain to remove all obstruction of the dance and his skin dripping with gore became an aerial parasol over the head of the lord during his Tāṇḍava performance. The skin is the symbol of covering or limitation (*āvaraṇa*) which on the plane of matter is known as *charman* and on the level of Prāṇa or the life-force is known as *śarman*. It is referred to in the Nāsadīya Hymn of the *Ṛig-veda* (X. 129.1, *kimāvarīvaḥ kuha kasya śarman*). Each individual is an animal or creature wearing a black antelope skin of the body which is known as *charman* amongst men and *śarman* amongst gods (ŚB. 3.2.1.8, *charma mānusham, śarma devatrā*).

The canopy of the elephant skin worn by the God in the beginning of his dance has earned for him the title *Kṛittivāsaḥ*, he who is clad in the garment of the skin. The elephant is the symbol of the universal the Mahat and was transformed as Gajāsura, the elephant demon, in the Purāṇa story whose Āsuric form was bent in order to bring him into the rhythmic mould of the yajña. In his elephant form the demon was of a wild and uncontrolled nature but the same had to be brought under control for the sake of the regulated creative activity, i.e., the unharnessed prāṇic energy of the Asura is harnessed as the docile tame elephant of Indra.

Śiva also wears the tiger's skin. The tiger is the wild animal of the forest. The wild forest was the symbol of the universal which represents the sum total of innumerable universes named as *Vanam* (RV. X. 82.4, where the imagery of the Forest and Tree has been used for the universal and the individual, respectively).

In the *Śatapatha B.* this symbolism of the wild animal and the domesticated animal is clearly explained : Prajāpati desired victory over the two worlds of the gods and men, viz., Devaloka and Manushyaloka. For this he created the twofold animals, i.e., the wild (*āraṇya*) and the domesticated (*grāmya*). With them he brought under control the two worlds, this world of men with the tamed animals and that world of the gods with the wild animals (ŚB. 13.2.4.1). God Rudra-Śiva moving like a wild hunter in the endless forest of the prestine creation in which universe was piled upon universe, took aim, with his arrows, against elephants and tigers and used their skin for his canopy and garment. He took the form of a Kirāta or wild hunter and became a true Paśupati Lord of all animals, in every nook and corner of the forest. He as Paśupati becomes the father of the forest beasts and accepts the lions or the tigers as the docile members of his household. His consort, the Great Mother Goddess, roams in the forest like Araṇyānī the Forest Nymph and as the mother of the wild animals (*mṛigāṇāṁ mātaram araṇyānīm*, RV. 10.146.6). In the boundless forest of the universal both the Great God and the Great Goddess are nude; then the cosmic cloth is woven with Seven Threads as warp and woof which are the sevenfold vibrations of the prāṇic energy. The seven threads of the cosmic loom are Mind, Life and the Five Elements of Matter. They constitute the Seven Threads (*Sapta-tantu*) of the cloth or covering, i.e., the Finite cosmos

in the lap of the Infinite. The two universal parents weave this cloth of the seven threads which is visible in the form of the Cosmic Yajña which is therefore called *Sapta-tāntava*, viz., the cloth of the seven threads, also popularly known as *Indrajāla*, the mesh of Indra. He who wears this marvellous cloth is Sūrya, called Vivasvān. And the ancestor of the whole race of living human beings emanating from Sūrya Vivasvān came to be styled as Vaivasvata Manu father of the Mānavas. The sun occupies the centre of his solar system and is like a cloth or cover woven by the rhythmic radiations of his rays which are sevenfold. The one must become diversified as seven. This is essential for creation. The single Ṛishi becomes diversified as seven; the single priest as the seven priests; the single ray as seven rays of seven colours and so a number of heptads underlie the cosmic and individual creation on the level of the Mind, Life and Matter.



Pārvatī. From Ahichchhatra Śiva Temple.

The nude God is Mahākāla—Absolute Time and the nude Goddess is Mahākālī—the Black Mother. They court each other in the dark Night prior to the light of creation. The Great Hunter and the Forest Nymph run wild after each other as the lion and the lioness in their wild dwellings. They meet at will with nothing to cover them and with the flames of fire as the seed creating innumerable forms of life. God Skanda, son of Fire, is archetypal of all individual centres of life born from the wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī and their long amours.

The material body is the cloth that screens the Prāṇa or Life-principle like the mantle its flame. Time and Space weave this mantle or the physical covering that give to the individual life-force its visible lining. Mahākāla is invisible or intangible. But the same is entering the orbit of experience of the senses as relative time in the form of the year, months and days. The rotation of nights and days is the cloth woven by the Black and White Sisters, i.e., the night and dawn, plying their looms in an unending cycle.

CHAPTER XVIII

Jyotirliṅga (The Pillar of Light)

Śiva is conceived of as the Great Pillar of Light—Jyotirliṅga. He is the infinite Tower of Fire (*Agni-skandha*) whose two ends are hidden in mystery. No one knows its source or finale or terminal point. Both his beginning and conclusion are shrouded in the deepest mystery which even the gods do not know. This Pillar of Fire symbolises the great principle of Prāṇa which is an eternal mystery. It is the universe itself of which the beginning and the end remain unknown for ever. The Jyotirliṅga is the great symbol of light encircled by a garland of flames rising from the earth to the heaven and transmitting light and heat to all those who come within its field.

As the Vedas speak, Rudra is the God of Fire himself. Fire symbolises the creative energy which is thrown up in manifest form by the churning of the primeval ocean. The ocean is the abode of Varuṇa and Agni is the form of Indra. The one typifies the mother principle and the other the father principle. Water and fire are like the two parents of the universe. Water is the principle of cold and fire that of heat. The interaction in between the two is essential for creation.

In further elaboration of the symbolism it is said that the principle of fire comprehends the whole space. It was a mysterious and wonderful creation. No one understands its mystery or true nature. All the Gods, Asuras and Yakshas stood in wonderment. The Asuras approached Brahmā, the Creator, himself to gauge the mystery of the Fiery Pillar and the Devas requested Vishṇu to sound the depth of the Pillar in the abysmal lower world. As the story has it, Brahmā seated on his goose went up and up into measureless space and did not find the beginning of the Pillar which in fact typified the *Avyakta* or the incomprehensible supreme reality beyond Time and Space. As Brahmā ascended he found the Jyotirliṅga rising still higher and so he became confounded in his consternation. He saw that a small flower of the Ketakī plant was coming from above towards the earth. He asked the flower

as to the spot from where it started its journey and whether he was coming from the upper end of the Great Pillar. On the flower saying "Yes" Brahmā persuaded him to bear witness that the latter had seen Brahmā also reaching the upper end of the Jyotirliṅga. Both came to where Vishṇu was standing. Vishṇu enquired whether Brahmā had seen the upper end of the measureless pillar and Brahmā replied in the affirmative saying that the faithful flower was a witness of his performance. He then asked Vishṇu as to whether he had measured the other end of the colossal Tower of Light and Energy that was the Jyotirliṅga. Vishṇu spoke in all humility that the Pillar was out of all bounds of measurement and no one could ever know its end. He had realised this truth in the very beginning and so he paid his homage to the infinite Lord of creation that Rudra-Śiva was. But the truth was at once discovered that Brahmā had spoken a lie and that the flower had been a false witness. The story says that both were made the object of imprecation and since then Brahmā ceased to receive worship in a temple and the Ketakī flower no longer was offered in divine worship.



Ekamukhī Śiva Liṅga. From Uchahara.

The story is given a dramatic touch but the truth remains that both Brahmā and Vishṇu, the foremost amongst gods, do not comprehend the mystery and the transcendent nature of Rudra-Śiva who is the Pillar of Fire or Tower of Light supporting the whole universe as the Axis Mundi that fills the interval between mother earth and father heaven. He is like an arrow that pierces the two ends of the creative substance, or the supreme reality behind the universe.

Brahmā represents the approach of intellect which is equipped with the power of argument and arithmetical computation. It throws a challenge to the mathematics of infinity. But it fails. The Plenum of Transcendence does not become the Vacuum of Creation. Howsoever one may try to squeeze the infinite within the dimensions of the finite one can never succeed to adjust it within the limits of the known or within the Procrustean bed of one's intellect. Ours is said to be an expanding univese expanding in Time and Space and the process of creation has not reached its ends and will not do so within out comprehension. Such is the dictum of science trying to exhaust the infinite well of truth with a leaking bucket.

The other approach is that of metaphysics where the power of intuition straightway accepts the transcendence of the divine and declares it to be beyond intellectual comprehension but only worthy of realisation with the infinite power of the soul and operation of the spiritual laws abiding in the human heart. This is the approach of the Ṛishi or the seer-philosopher who is a poet and yogin having direct access to the truth of divine reality. His thousand-petalled mind opens in expanding orbits of light and life and has a vision of the divine majesty and ecstasy that increases in depth for ever.

This Jyotirliṅga or the Pillar of Light is symbolised by Sūrya as the centre of the solar system or its universe. The energy in the sun is no doubt material as light and heat are. But that is only one aspect of Sūrya vindicating itself in physical creation. There is the other aspect of energy and consciousness or prāṇa which is much more subtle and of which the sun is the universal truth upholding it by its eternal pulsation. The sun is the visible form of Rudra-Śiva and his rhythmic movement of radiation is the dance of Śiva. The movements of his rays are verily the dance-steps of the Tāṇḍava performance of Śiva being witnessed by the Great Goddess Mahāśakti and by all the gods (Viśvedevāḥ) for whom the rhythmic dance provides a potion of immortality. It is for this reason that Sūrya was accepted as the great symbol of the divine reality, that is, Brahman—as stated at the very outset of Vedic formulations—*Brahma Sūryasamaṁ jyotiḥ* (*Yajurveda* 23.48), i.e., Brahma has similar splendour that is with the sun. Both are fountainhead of infinite energy and one may form some idea of the majesty of Brahman by looking at the greatness of Sūrya. Their *Mahimā* cannot be fully described. The whole created world or cos-

mic manifestation is the visible symbol of that greatness. It is not the physical sun that rises in the heaven, but it is the majestic principle of prāṇa or the life-principle.[45]

Sūrya is the Deva or the supreme divine reality for whom it is graphically said that he sits in his golden chariot and moves in the heaven catering both to the immortal world of the devas and the mortal world of men. Such a centre of vitality and consciousness is the root of creation for whom the Vedas appropriately use the title 'Brahman'.

Sūrya is the visible symbol of Jyotirliṅga, i.e., the towering pillar of light and radiation which has pierced every atom and life-cell and has transfixed all objects and beings in the universe. There are millions and billions of suns, all arranged in one axial alignment whose energies like the symphony of a chant mingle with each other and create such deep stirrings as permeate the remotest end of the cosmos and fill it with heaving motions. In one simple formula that is expressing itself as expansion and contraction of the macrocosm and the microcosm, the giant stars and the tiny cells. The Purāṇas conceive of this twofold pulsation as colossal Agitation (*Kshobhaṇa*) which springs on the substratum of some supreme reality, that is transcendent and manifesting itself as *Saṅkocha* and *Vikāśa*, i.e., the rhythmic movement of the centripetal and centrifugal forces that are visible in the world of matter.[46]

The invisible transcendent principle of the self is the Liṅga as defined in the Purāṇa (*avyaktaṁ liṅgamuchyate, Liṅga Purāṇa* 1.3.1). Energy and matter are like the two wheels of the cosmic chariot. These are the two infinities which are beyond measure and neither the approach of the scientist with hard-baked mathematical calculation nor that of the seer with the power of his intuition and meditation can succeed in comprehending their full glory. Therefore, the seer have spoken of the divine splendour as comparable to crores and crores of Sūryas (*koṭisūrya-sama-prabha*) and the scientist with great zeal of factual explorations into the depth of space have turned back to say 'One Two Three...Infinity'.

Brahmā and Vishṇu are just two types of mind who strive to probe into the mystery of the unknown and collapse without coming to the limits of that which is immeasurable. The human mind begins to burst and the only safety valve is to turn to one's own centre and realise there the glory of the supreme divine. Thus, it is said : Sūrya is the Self of all that moves and moves not.

Energy obviously has two aspects of light and heat. The actnic and the thermal radiations of the sun form a single spectrum which is present in every one of the thousand rays of the solar orb. Each ray is a sampling of his divine majesty stalking thousandfold between earth and heaven, as rightly said: *sahasradhā mahimānaḥ sahasraṁ yāvad dyāvā-prithivī tāvadit tat*, RV. 1.114.8. Truly speaking the metaphysical doctrine is that the creator and his creation are both coeval and coextensive. Brahman as the principal reality and Vāk as the world of matter are measures of each other (*yāvad Brahma tāvatī vāk*, RV. 10.114.8). This is a statement made under supreme enlightenment and it is no small thing to estimate truly the glory of Infinite Nature. Nature and God are here in complete correspondence and in their embrace as the two universal parents none excels the other. Otherwise the act of progenition would be impaired.

These two aspects of the male and female, the heat and the light, the immortal and the mortal, the gods and the bhūtas are compared to a single bow termed *nīla-lohita*. Only a portion of this bow or spectrum comes within the range of the human eye the rest of its infinite fields are hidden in the ultra violet and the infra red twinklings. These are the encircling haloes of the great Jyotirliṅga. which shoot as flames of fire and light. They constitute a maṇḍala framing the giant Pillar of Light that supports the world. This is a maṇḍala or orb round every individual centre of life and energy that is manifesting itself as the self. The twofold energies of red and blue colour intimations are present everywhere. They mingle as the two poles of a unified vibration and create the tensional movement, that is the sign of life. It is surprising to read in the *Atharva Veda* that the epiblast (*udara*) of the transcendent giant (Vrātya) is blue and the hypoblast (*prishṭa*) is red (*lohita*) which together are constituents of a single organism wherever the life-force is making itself manifest.

The Jyotirliṅga was earlier conceived in the Vedic imagery as the arrow piercing the earth and the heaven with its two ends. The same gave to Rudra-Śiva the appropriate title of the great hunter brandishing his bow and roaming to the farthest ends of the primeval forest that was the universe itself. It was also conceived as an *Udumbara*, the lofty fig-tree, that rises to the top of the sky under the shade of which the great god is seated in samādhi and fills the space with his radiance.

We may advert to the basic ideas of the creation being a yajña having an altar in which the fires of creation are blazing in a session that is recurrent and repeating every moment of time. According to the Indian conception the divine reality named Vishṇu or Rudra-Śiva is incarnating as Time without beginning and end in which the threefold process of the birth, continuance and withdrawal of the cosmos are unbroken (*Vishṇu Purāṇa* 1.2.26). Indian imagery both in the Vedas and the Purāṇas, in metaphysics and in cults, grapels with these fundamental truths of creation. Man takes delight in making variant expressions woven by a thread of unity that may be easily perceived by a discerning mind. In the realm of symbolism these various forms explode into new orbits of meaning which are all welcome as existing in the common world of Truth.

CHAPTER XIX

Rudra As Paśupati (The Lord of Animals)

One of the names of Rudra was Paśupati in Vedic lierature. *Paśu* means an animal. Each centre of life or prāṇa was conceived of as a Paśu. It was symbolically stated that Agni, the God of Prāṇa, assumed the form of an animal, that is a black antelope and hid himself from the gods. The antelope is just a type of all animals or centres of prāṇic individuation. It was accepted as the animal *par excellence* of yajña. The life-force in the individual centre is the model of organised yajña. The black skin (*krishṇamṛiga-charma*) is the symbol of the body in which the prāṇic force takes its shelter. The cosmic devas made a search for Agni and ultimately discovered him in the form of a *mṛiga* or antelope that roams over the land which is sacred for yajña.

The five sacrificial animals (*yajñīya-paśu*) are reckoned as man (*purusha*), horse (*aśva*), cow (*go*), goat (*aja*) and ram (*avi*). They symbolise the five kinds of regulated movements. Purusha is the symbol of the balance of all motions in the centre that is the principle of rest which is the source of all dynamism. The horse is the symbol of movement away from the centre. The cow symbolises movement from the circumference towards the centre. She goes to the pasture ground every morning and returns in the evening; being thus a model of regulated movement. The goat is the symbol of accelerated movement and the ram is a slow moving creature which by its tardiness acts against the speed. These are the five variations between rest and movement and wherever energy functions or is released for action it must be in one of these forms. It is said that Agni as the great Prajāpati had a vision of himself in the form of these five animals. "And since he had a vision, the latter are known as *paśus* ".[47] It was a well known doctrine that Agni is the lord of all the paśus (*Agnir vai paśūnām ishṭe*, ŚB. 4.8.4.11-48) and whatever animals there are they are all aspects of Agni.[48] The gods came to know the secret of Agni and declared him to be the same as the animals.[49]

It was a well known Vedic doctrine that Agni was the same as Rudra and therefore the paśus are believed to be of Rudra and sacred to him (*raudrā vai paśavaḥ*, Ś.B. 6.3.2.7) and Rudra was clearly addressed as Paśupati (*rudraḥ paśūnāṁ patiḥ*, TB. 3-11.42).

Explaning the symbolism of *Paśubandha* it was stated that the *grāmya paśus* or the domesticated animals are tied in the sacrifice as animals of this earth, that is prāṇic centres manifesting in matter, and that the wild animals belong to the world of heaven (TB. 3.9.3.1). The omniform creator is so called because he has assumed the form of all paśus. Agni and Soma were both styled as paśus.

In fact, each animal or creature as a type of the life-force functioning in the body was conceived of as the combined form of Agni and Soma. The body is the paśu *par excellence*. That requires to be sustained with food and it was graphically described as Agni eating *rayi* or *soma* and taking its sustenance from day to day.[50] The principle of *posha* was symbolised as God Pūshan who was therefore conceived of as the symbol of all aninals.[51] Physical nourishment is *posha* and that depends entirely on Agni assimilating Soma or food. All herbs, plants, cereals, fruits and animal products are but different forms of Soma. Agni cannot consume or assimilate anything that is not Soma. Only that product can become the food of fire which itself has been processed by the power of prāṇa or the life-force as manifes-

ting on the various levels of plant and animal kingdoms. Agni is the son of three mothers—a Tryambaka God, that is, as nurtured in the plants, animals and men.

The number of paśus is said to be a thousand or infinite.[62] All the species of the animal and plant kingdoms are paśus with Rudra-Śiva as their lord. When Agni, the great Prajāpati, appeared in the garb of an animal being delivered from the mother's womb by the most mysterious chemistry of nature, it looked most beautiful.[63] The animal or prāṇāgni is encased in the body or within the two shells of the mother oyster called *śipi* and therefore each animal or individual is truly *Śipi-vishṭa Prajāpati*, i.e., the creator incarnating within the two oyster shells.[64]

In essence the Vedic doctrine was that the Prāṇas or the life-forces are verily manifesting as animals (*prāṇāḥ paśavaḥ*, TB. 3.2.89; ŚB. 7.5.2.6). Prajāpati created the animals with his own Prāṇas (ŚB. 7.5.2.6). Thus, Prajāpati himself in the form of Agni and Rudra-Śiva became known as Paśupati. It is in this conspicuous form that he is depicted as Paśupati on a well known sealing at Mohenjo-daro in which a cross-legged deity is surrounded by four wild animals, viz. elephant, tiger, unicorn and bison who occupy a commanding position. That was the conception of Paśupati in Vedic times which was widespread in folk-lore and folk-cult also.

That tradition about Rudra-Śiva continues and a significant exposition is found in the *Liṅga Purāṇa* (Pt. II, Ch. IX). There it is said that in the preceding ages the gods observed at the divine level the auspicious Pāśupata Vrata and even Prajāpati Brahmā carried out this vow. The sage Sanatkumāra enquired as to who was Paśupati, who were the Paśus and what were the Pāśas or bonds by which all animals are kept in bondage and from which they seek release. He was told that the Great God Rudra is Paśupati who is endless in Time and Space and who is the same as Brahmā and Vishṇu. The Paśus or animals are all those creatures ranging from Brahmā himself to the numerous plants of the earth who have fallen into the bondage of the world.[65]

The Purāṇic writer initiates still deeper metaphysical exposition by stating several other meanings of Pāśas or bonds. He says that the twentyfour elements of creation are the bonds, obviously employing the philosophical elements reckoned by the Sāṁkhya and Śaiva Schools. All human souls have fallen a prey to these bonds and their deliverance is brought about only by Śiva-Rudra (2.9.15-16). Again, that the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*) creates the twenty kinds of Pāśas or bonds in the form of the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, the five gross elements (*bhūtas*) and the five subtle elements (*tanmātrās*). All those who are inclined to enjoy the pleasures of the senses fall a prey to these bonds of the senses and the objects enjoyed by them. But those who are devotees of Lord Maheśvara obtain their freedom from the bonds.

The three guṇas—Sattva, Rajas and Tamas—are the principal positive factors of action and they are the bonds from which each individual should seek his release through the grace of Lord Śiva. Bhakti is threefold, viz., *mānasa* or meditation on the form and nature of Śiva ; *vāchika* or the utterance of mantras like *Praṇava* ; and *kāyika* or the performance of *Prāṇāyāma* and other Yogic practices. All the Dharmas and Adharmas, the relative ordinances of good and evil, are the bonds from which one should seek freedom in order to obtain salvation through the grace of Śiva. The five kinds of Kleśas or physical and mental thwartings are the Pāśas which are the noose of God Śiva. They are reckoned as Igonrance (*Avidyā*), Self-conceit (*Asmitā*), Attachment (*Rāga*), Aversion (*Dveśa*), and Perversity (*Abhiniveśa*).

Avidyā is a kind of darkness of the mind and soul ; Asmitā is illusion ; Rāga is Mahāmoha or impenetrable confusion between good and evil. Dveśa is deep inertia (*tamisrā*) and Abhiniveśa is false knowledge.

The wise teachers say that there are 62 kinds of darknesses into which the above five may be divided. All these can be overcome by the teachings of the Supreme Teacher Śiva in his Dakshiṇāmūrti form. This is the great Pāśupata Yoga whose fountainhead and source of knowledge is the great God Śiva whose pure and transcendent aspect cannot be soiled by any modification of matter.

The above conception of Paśupati Śiva was much elaborated by the Śaiva teachers of the Pāśupata School of which the founder-teacher was Lakulīśa. He was born at Kāyāvarohaṇa and from there started a roaring campaign against false beliefs and preached the religion of Bhakti to Śiva and his worship in

the form of Liṅga. He was a stern disciplinarian demanding complete detachment (Brahmacharya) and insisted upon the life of a Parivrājaka or wandering mendicant who should carry the message of the divinity of Rudra-Śiva from door to door. In the course of a few centuries the Pāśupata School of Śaivism became predominant throughout North India and all great Tīrthas like Ujjain, Varanasi, Pushkara, Mathura, Prayaga and Thanesvara became its centres. The purity and drive of these teachers of Pāśupata Śaivism made an eloquent appeal to the people and exercised a far-reaching influence on the religious history of India. During the Gupta times it was a faith as powerful and wide-spread as the religious movement of the great Bhāgavatas who made friends with them and we find the evidence of the same in several Purāṇas which were cast in mould of both the Pāśupata Śaivism and the Bhāgavata Vaishṇavism.

The principal tenets of the Pāśupata School of Purāṇic Śaivism were the following :—

Liṅga worship, installation of Śiva Liṅgas, glorifying Śiva as the Supreme Divine Reality, wholesale adoption of the Sāṁkhya metaphysics with the addition of Śiva as the 25th entity (Pañchaviṁśaka Sāṁkhya), Gurucharyā or the conception of a long succession of teachers from Rudra-Śiva to the last disciple descended from him, Pañchabrahma Doctrine of five-faced Śiva with pentadic scheme of creation as the five heads, Ashṭamūrti Śiva, Bhasma-dhāraṇa or besmearing the body with ashes, celibacy, mendicancy or self-denying life of poverty, Akiñchanatva or self-naughting of an extreme type which implied a participation in the affairs of the world but with perfect detachment, study of the Āgamas and the Vedas, intense practice of Yoga and Prāṇāyāma and a mastery of Dhyāna, temple building and worship of the image with visible ceremonies and an enthusiastic approach to all problems of metaphysics, philosophy, religion, art and culture.

CHAPTER XX

Ardhanārīśvara

One of the most majestic forms of Śiva is that of Ardhanārīśvara. It has deep spiritual meaning. The Purāṇa writers go into raptures about it. This form of Śiva had its antiquity in Vedic symbolism. It is described there under several names, viz., Agni-Soma, Strī-Pumān, Kumāra-Kumārī, Mahānagna-Mahānagnī, Svayambhū-Virāj, Pitā-Mātā, Parārdha-Avarārdha (Upper half—Lower half), Katamārdha-Viśvārdha (Unknown half—World half), Prāṇa-Apāna, Yuvan-Yuvatī, Mitrāvaruṇa-Urvaśī, Pūrṇakumbha-Kumbhinī, Nara-Nārī, Deva-Devī, Daksha-Aditi, Manas-Kāma, Uparisvit-Adhaḥsvit, Prayati-Svadhā (Energy-Matter), Parastāt-Avastāt, Viśvasṛij-Viśvasṛishṭi, Suparṇa-Suparṇī, and many other pairs of the male and the female which go together in the scheme of cosmogonic procreation. Not only the Eternal Man is juxtaposed with the Eternal Woman as in the case of the Umā-Maheśvara Mūrti or the Umāliṅgana Mūrti of Śiva, i.e., Śiva and Pārvatī embracing each other, but the images shown as subdivided into half male and half female form (*Deha-dvayārdhaghaṭanā*) in which the right half is Śiva and left half is Pārvatī or Husband and Wife sharing the two halves of the same maṇḍala (*Vāmārdhajānī*).

This is, in fact, the hermaphrodite form of a human being or animal combining characteristics of both sexes. In Indian iconography there are many examples of Ardhanārīśvara Śiva in which the matted locks, half vertical eye, serpent, sacred thread, necklace of human skull, tiger's skin and male organ are shown on the right side, and frizzled locks, normal eye, moon god, ear-pendant, one breast, beaded girdle, silken saree and anklet are shown on the left half side. This is demonstrating the male-female aspects (*Nara-Nārī-vapu*) in a visual and graphic form as a cospicuous motif of plastic art. There is no difficulty in understanding the suggested meaning of the representation.



Ardhanārīśvara head. From Rajghat.

It is the basic truth of both physiology and psychology that each individual is half-male and half-female. The characterisitcs of each sex are coextensive in the whole body and each individual self partakes of the two features of the male and the female. The twofold sex impulse is present in the whole body. In man the male part is predominant and in the woman the female; and both elemental passions need to meet with their

counterparts. The truth of the Psyche must become the truth of the physical body. Cupid and Psyche form an inseparable pair, and are but archetypal of the two opposite sexes forming a single pair for the purpose of the highest perfection of the human soul and begetting the progeny through a complex mechanism of chromosomes or mysterious cell-division.

It is stated in the *Ṛig Veda* : " What you describe to me as Male are in reality also Female. He who has the penetrative eye of the mind discerns this truth, and not the blind who sees with the physical eye only."[56] This constitutional truth of the psychical person is the same as the Animus and the Anima of modern psychology. The grand penomenon of Ardhanārīśvara is writ large on the visage of all living human and animal beings and also of all flowering plants where the romantic drama of the pistil and the anthers is carried on within the bridal chamber.

The bridegroom and the bride forming the two halves of the wedding ceremony are typical of the Ardhanārīśvara form. They are just aspects of Śiva and Pārvatī in whom the respective Kuṇḍalinīs or serpent powers in their male and female forms open their coils for an upward ascent and reach to combine with each other the highest centres of the brain, that is symbolised as Kailāsa. Kailāsa is etymologically explained as the place of all dalliances (*kelīnāṁ samūhaḥ kailam, ten āsyate iti Kailāsaḥ*), i.e., an ideal eminence or the towering peak of all psychical impulses and amorous dalliances where Śiva and Pārvatī or Nara and Nārī of each individual centre sit in embrace, and enjoy for the full session of life.

The *Bṛihan-Nāradīya Purāṇa* conceives of the Ardhanārīśvara form as a person of half black and half yellow form, nude on one side and clothed on the other, wearing skulls and a garland of lotuses in the two halves respectively, showing the male feature on the right and the female characteristics on the left (2.73.49).

Brahmā himself asked Śiva to divide his body into two halves[57]. Thereupon Śiva created the form of the Devī from his left half side. That was in every way equal to himself. His first wife was Śraddhā who became Satī and then Pārvatī (*Liṅga Purāṇa* 1.99.13-14). In reality she is unborn (*ajāta paramārdha*), but she is spoken of as born from Śiva.[58] Siva has the most mysterious nature. By his one half he became male and the other half female called Śatarūpā or the beauty of hundred forms.

What Brahmā had created as Virāj split into two halves as male and female. The male is known as Manu and the female as Śatarūpā. Thus the primeval man was a giant possessing the characteristics of both sexes[59]. The *Matsya P.* also explains the same motif (260.1-10). The Ardhanārīśvara form is the composite aspect of Liṅga and Yoni[60]. (*Liṅga Purāṇa*, 1.99.7-11). Pārvatī represents the *yoni* and Śiva the *liṅga* and the union of the two creates the world (*Liṅga Purāṇa*, 1.99.6-7). The goddess is the supreme power of the transcendent creator (*Śiva Purāṇa*, Vāyavīya S. chap. 15). Thus, the Purāṇic writers dilate on the Ardhanārīśvara Śiva comprised of the half male and half female aspects giving to it a metaphysical exposition as well as an iconographic formulation.

The two aspects were conceived in the Vedas in serveral ways. The single egg or germ of creation was split into Prāṇa and Bhūta. He was called Hiraṇyagarbha in which *hiraṇya* or gold is the symbol of prāṇa and *garbha* that of matter. The female germ is fertilised by the male energy and the two together are known as Hiraṇyagarbha. Without the golden speck of the male seed the egg remains inactive. But by the union of the male it becomes energised. Prajāpati himself becomes the golden germ by the mystical process of self-fishion. He who knows the true nature of Hiraṇyagarbha knows Brahman. In the beginning Gold as prāṇa enters the world and that takes the form of Skambha or the Pillar of golden light which is the *axis mundi* and is Supreme and Inexpressible (*paramam anatyudyam*, AV. 10.7.28).

In the midst of the world Prajāpati as the World Pillar held that Gold which became Hiraṇyagarbha. It consists of the Field which is Prakṛiti and the Knower of the Field which is Brahman.[61] That creation was spontaneous like the flash of a lightning from the clouds.[62]

The golden egg in its Ardhanārīśvara form conceals within itself all the possibilities of existence, i.e. the invisible and the visible entities of the Devas and the Bhūtas.[63] That egg contained within it not only the gods and the Asuras and human beings but also the five Bhūtas, the seven oceans and the seven mountains in its cells and innumerable centres. This is exactly the nature of the mother cell which becomes the support of all creation; in the protoplasm of the cell is found the essence of all the flavours or tastes.

Whatever dualities are in the world may be traced to their source in the Ardhanārīśvara cell or the fertilised ovum from which the bodies of living beings are developed. All the angelic and demoniacle powers of light and darkness inhere in the original groove which takes the form of the brain centres. Their composite balance and juxtaposition is the human being. The characteristics of both the father and the mother create the normal individual.

The male and the female are symbolised as Agni and Soma and when that imagery is invoked the whole range of cosmic dichotomy on whatever level or field becomes invoked. On the biological plane there is no greater explanation for it than that of the Ardhanārīśvara form of Rudra-Śiva or Prāṇāgni or the basal metabolic force of life. The above duality is expressed by the distinguished term *Rodasī*, which includes Dyāvā-Pṛithivī or heaven and earth. Heaven symbolises the immortal world of the devas and Earth the mortal world of matter. The sky over head and the earth below the feet are but convenient symbols of the two eternal and corelated categories of Life and Matter.



Śiva. Gupta Period. Mathura.

This imagery was quite explicit in the earliest stratum of Vedic thought in which the two Universal Parents are conceived of as Heaven and Earth, the father principle being symbolised as Heaven and the mother principle as Earth.[64] The inexhaustible reservoir of energy, i.e., Śakti that creates the world (*śaktiḥ sṛijati brahmāṇḍam*) was given the name of Aditi the World Mother. She unfolds herself as the triad of mother, father and son in biological manifestation ;[65] as the heaven, intermediate region and earth on the spatial plane ; as the Past, Present and Future in the temporal extension (RV. 1.89.10).

CHAPTER XXI

HARI-HARA MŪRTI

(Or the Composite Form of Vishṇu and Śiva)

There is a composite form of Rudra-Śiva named as Harihara or Śaṁkara-Nārāyaṇa. In this aspect the right half is Siva and the left half is Vishṇu. Several such images are known in Indian iconography. It is stated in the *Bṛihan-Nāradīya Purāṇa* that Ṛishi Jaimini recited the *Veda-pāda Stotra* before the image of Harihara in Puṇḍarīkapura and Śiva in his divine ecstasy performed the Tāṇḍava dance on that occasion.[66] In the *Ṛig Veda*, Indra is invoked as *Nṛitu* the great dancer, an epithet which was applicable to Śiva Naṭarāja and the same mantra in its second part is woven by Jaimini in his Stotra (73.68). Śiva by his Tāṇḍava dance filled the whole space with an ocean of bliss seeing which Jaimini burst into one of the most exalted invocations weaving together the Vedic speech and the classical Sanskrit of the Purāṇic times.[67] It is a *namaḥ* stotra of the most exquisite style and unique imagery found anywhere among the numerous Śiva stotras (73.30-152).

In the *Matsya Purāṇa* we have a short description of the Śiva-Nārāyaṇa form : in the right-half is Śiva holding a trident and the left-half Mādhava. Vishṇu has two arms adorned with bejewelled armlets and holding conch and *chakra* (or in place of *chakra* a *gadā*). He wears a girdle and Pītāmbara cloth. In the right half Śiva wears matted locks and moon on the head, and serpent armlets and holds his right hand in *varada mudrā* and a Triśūla in the other hand. He wears the sacred thread of a serpent and anklet in the form of a Nāga, and a skin on his hip. This is the beautiful form of Śiva-Nārāyaṇa (*Matsya Purāṇa* 2.60.21-27).

We find a metaphysical exposition of this composite form (*śarīra-yoga*) in the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa* where it is said that Brahmā obtained a vision of the joint form of Śiva and Vishṇu, and what is more he saw Śiva in the form of Vishṇu and Vishṇu in the form of Śiva.[68] It was a miracle that Śiva wore the Pītāmbara and held in his hands, conch, wheel and mace, and Vishṇu took the robe of a tiger's skin and the attributes of a trident and spear. Śiva accepted Garuḍa as his vehicle and Vishṇu took the banner of a bull (*Harivaṁśa* 1.25.27).

Brahmā declared that Brahman was one (*ekaṁ Brahma*) and there was no opposition between Vishṇu and Rudra who shared the single aspect of the transcendent self.

Brahmā interrogated Mārkaṇḍeya about this mystery and the latter replied : "I see no difference between the Vishṇu aspect of Śiva and the Śiva aspect of Vishṇu.[69] Both are the differentiated aspects of the transcendent Akshara Brahma.[70] In fact, what is Vishṇu is Rudra and what is Rudra is Brahmā. One divine reality becomes differentiated as the three gods—Brahmā, Vishṇu and Rudra.[71] All three are self-existent creators and lords of the worlds and all of them are Ardhanārīśvara.

"As water mingles with water so Vishṇu in his composite form becomes of the same aspect as Rudra.[72] As fire mingle with fire and assumes the form of a single flame so Rudra mingles with Vishṇu and becomes Vishṇumaya. We should think of Rudra as of fiery aspect and realise Vishṇu as Soma and thus the whole world is the composite form of Agni and Soma.[73] They both create and destroy the creation together. Both are supreme gods—Maheśvara showing benevolence to the created world. The gods Nārāyaṇa and Maheśvara become the past, present and future. This is the highest secret to be realised. Rudra holds Vishṇu as the supreme deity and Vishṇu regards Śiva to be the same.[74] The one transcendent being has differentiated himself in the form of the two gods. There is no Śiva without Vishṇu and no Vishṇu without Śaṁkara, and therefore Rudra and Vishṇu assume a composite form as Harihara.[75]

"I, therefore, bow to Rudra and to Vishṇu moving together. On the one side I bow to the three eyes and to the two eyes on the other. On the one the red eye and the lotus eye on the other. On the one father of Kumāra and on the other of Pradyumna. On the one holding the Gaṅgā and on the other the mountain. On the one wearing the garland of skulls and on the other Vanamālā. On the one holding the trident, on the other a discus. On the one holding the *Brahma-daṇḍa* and the other a golden club. On the one wearing the skin and on the other the yellow robe. I bow to the lord of Pārvatī and also to the lord of Lakshmī. I bow to him who holds the Khaṭvāṅga and the club in his composite aspects; who smears the ashes and the black *agaru* ; who lives in the cemetery and who sleeps in the ocean ; who rides on a bull and who rides on the Garuḍa.

"I bow to Rudra who has many forms and to Vishṇu of many incarnations. I bow to the one who supports the world and to the other who brings about the dissolution. I bow to one who is of a benevolent form (*saumya rūpa*) and to the other of a terrible form (*bhairava rūpa*). I bow to one who destroyed the sacrifice of Daksha and I bow to the other who brought about the bondage of Bali. My obeisance to one who destroyed Tripura, Kāma and Andhaka, and to the other who destroyed the Asuras named Mura, Naraka and Kaiṭabha. The one has a thousand arms and the other also has infinite hands. Obeisance to lord Vishṇu and to lord Śiva.[76] The one is worshipped by the mantras of Yajurveda (viz. *Śatarudriya* for Śiva) and the other by the Sāma chants (i.e. Vishṇu)."

This great Stotra was held dear for recitation (*Hariharātmaka Stotra*) by such sages as Vyāsa, Nārada, Bhāradvāja, Garga, Viśvāmitra, Agastya, Pulastya and the high-souled Dhaumya (125.59.60).

In short, the composite form of Harihara is the same as that of Agni-Soma as stated in the Stotra in the clearest terms. The whole creation on the universal level and the usual level is the manifestation of the potent aspects of Agni and Soma which represent the two principles of fire and water. In the *Ṛig Veda* it is said that some thinkers explain the importance of fire and others of water. But the truth is that both are of equal importance (RV. 1.161.9).

This composite principle of Vishṇu and Rudra who was also named as Indra, is for the first time enunciated in the *Ṛig Veda* where it is said that both Indra and Vishṇu are always functioning in a kind of associative rivalry and none of them is defeated by the other and the two together create the three infinities (*tredhā sahasram*) of Mind, Life and Matter. Their mutual friction or tensional force or the polarity of energy is called *Spardhā* (RV. 6.69.8, the whole Sūkta being dedicated to Indra and Vishṇu). Thus it is said that the two deities Indra and Vishṇu reside in a single jar of Soma which is the individual body itself comparable to an ocean in its majestic infinity.[77]

Thus the Purāṇic writers created a liberal imagery of Indra and Vishṇu functioning in one centre and the artists gave it a complete form in the Harihara Mūrti.

CHAPTER XXII

Sthāṇu and Pramatha

(The Great God in His Changeless Eternal Form and Tortuous Forms)

Śiva as the eternal God is known as Sthāṇu. It is the changeless aspect of the deity. Then there are innumerable emanations known as Gaṇa or Pramatha which represent the multiplicity of the prāṇic energy of Rudra-Śiva. Both form the subject of Purāṇic description and iconographic representation.

In the Vedas the doctrine of a single Rudra who has no second is enunciated in the clearest terms. This is the supreme divine reality as the transcendent soul of all material manifestations. It is the unraffled ocean of energy. Wave after wave of creative ecstasy rises against this substratum and numberless universes come into existence. Each has unlimited varieties and multiplicities. They all exist in the womb of the unknown infinite or the one Rudra.

The Sthāṇu form is changeless, beyond the categories of Time and Space, i.e., represented by the liṅga form of Śiva. The *Liṅga* is defined as *Avyakta*. In the liṅga form there is no manifestation of the five organs of sense and the five organs of action. In the liṅga form the ten organs are conspicuous by absence or in other words the prāṇic energy of the ten organs of sense and action is present at every point of the liṅga. The liṅga is the same as the Seed and the ten sense organs inhere completely with all their potencies in the Seed. The seeds of the two parents come into union and produce the human form of Śiva (*purushavigraha*) represented in iconography as Śiva and Pārvatī, the two parents of the universe (*jagataḥ pitarau*).

In the *Ṛig Veda* the transcendent Purusha is described as having a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet where the number thousand stands for the infinite. The Seed is the maṇḍala of energy and the implication is that in the undifferentiated stage each point of the maṇḍala has the potentiality of heads, eyes and feet, i.e., may become the source of individual manifestation. Such is the quality of the Seed that it creates a Purusha.



The Great Dancer. From Ellora.

This cosmic being is *Avyakta*, i.e., it has the form of a liṅga with its infinite majesty established in the womb of the mother described as Mahadyoni, i.e., the universal mother principle that gives birth to all the worlds. According to the *Gītā* the Seed and the Womb (*Bīja* and *Yoni*) are the source of all created forms (*mūrtis*), i.e., the energised individual creations.

The thousand-headed Purusha is also described as having eyes on all sides (*viśvataś-chakshuḥ*), mouths on all sides (*viśvato mukhaḥ*), arms and feet on all sides (*viśvato bāhur ut viśvataspāt*, RV. 10.81.3). He is the one god who splits himself into the twofold principles of Father and Mother that are symbolised as Heaven and Earth (*dyāvābhūmiḥ janayan deva ekaḥ*) and keeps them together by the upward and downward movements of his arms as in a dance. These are the terpsichorean whirlings of the Tāṇḍava movement which keep the subtle energies of creation knit together in rhythmic pulsations of the most mysterious kind.

The self-existent Purusha is beyond the orbit of sense knowledge, subtle, imperceptible, eternal. His *ojas* or energy is introvert and turned towards the centre (*vrittaujas*)[78] He is exactly the liṅga form or the maṇḍala which has drawn all the energies in his own centre. It is conceived of as the preceding state of darkness whose definite characteristics are unknown.[79] This liṅga form becomes the Purusha or Nara-Nārī-vigraha and from there all creatures are born.

These are known as Gaṇas or Pramathas, i.e., the hosts of Rudra manifesting both in straight and crooked forms. The former are benevolent in which the dance of Śiva is controlled by a ver-

ticle Brahmasūtra or a fixed plumb-line. In this aspect the rhythm of the dance is perfectly balanced and all the creative activity of prāṇa functions according to the divine ordinances formulated in the beginning. That is the aspect of Naṭarāja Śiva or Indra as Nṛitu the great dancer. He is benevolent Śiva whose rhythm is creating the normal bodies of all creatures.

But when the dance rhythm is disturbed all kinds of tortuous forms come into existence. Their crooked bodies and limbs show that the prāṇic vibration is out of the plumb-line and the measured balance of the Brahmasūtra. The former are the devas of beautiful form and the latter are the asuras or pramathas of crooked forms. Śiva is their overlord and his divine influence keeps them under control. In iconography they are depicted as corpulent small dwarfs with every limb growing awry, the belly protuberant, the arms and legs dwarfish, the eyes squint or set much too deep in their sockets and the head out of proportion to the body. Such gaṇas are described in the Purāṇas as the many forms of Śiva, created by him at the time of disturbing the sacrifice of Daksha. Sometimes they are described as *asuras* of diverse shapes, at other times as *niśāchara gaṇas* (*Harivaṁśa*, 3.32.5-14), or as grotesque and dwarfish *yakshas*. Even the faces of animals and birds were associated with such benevolent beings and a whole army of them became the followers of Śiva. For example, one was Nāgendra-vaktra, i.e., having the head of an elephant (*Liṅga Purāṇa*, 1.82.31-35), who became Gaṇeśa the elephant-headed deity and also a son of Rudra-Śiva.



Gaṇa. From Nachana Kuthara.

Another was Skanda the six-headed god who became famous as the son of the six mothers. Creation is conceived of as the differentiation of one into many (*ekaṁ sad bahudā* or *nānā*). The multiple forms are spoken of as *gaṇās* and their overlord as *Gaṇapati*. The single overlord transforms himself into numerous integral fractions for the sake of creation.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Meaning of Gaṇapati

Gaṇapati is the lord of Gaṇas. He is popularly known as Gaṇeśa. What is Gaṇa ? The answer is that Gaṇa is a pramatha, a bhūta, a yaksha, a rākshasa. That which is deformed, ugly or deviating from the Brahmasūtra is a Gaṇa.In art the Gaṇas are represented as deformed creatures with all kinds of contortions and abnormalities.

There are two aspects of life, the one which is straight, stable, fixed, changeless called *sthāṇu* and the other as instable, fleeting, tortuous, changing, unsteady, flickering, inconstant. The latter is the nature of a *pramatha*. The form of life which is in accordance with the vertical axis is beautiful and perfect as nature designed it. Its opposite is the form which is distorted and cancelling of the plumb-line and therefore a bundle of deformities. The *pramatha* or Gaṇa is conceived of as *Vighna* implying all impediments, obstacles, interruptions, hurdles, difficulties, troubles, in one word all that is opposed to normal behaviour and dispensation of nature. This is known as *Ghora*, the terrible or the hideous aspect, personified as a Gaṇa.

When the Creator was confronted with the problem of creation he invited trouble for himself, as it were. As soon as he conceived the idea that itself became a ghost, and an apparition without substance and reality, a mere appearance and therefore named *Abhva*, literally that which was nothing and which in later terminology was named a *Yaksha* a glimmering light at a distance which appears and then vanishes. This Yaksha was the Mind of the Creator as stated in the *Śiva-Saṁkalpa Sūkta—yadapūrvaṁ yakshaṁ antaḥ prajānāṁ tanme manaḥ śiva-saṁkalpamastu.*

There are two things : on the one hand is the Yaksha and on the other Śiva. Prajāpati was Śiva in the unmanifest state. His mind assumed the form of the Yaksha for the sake of manifestation.

The first primeval principle of mind filled the whole space, so vast was the body of Yaksha, a huge corpus sprawling to fill the entire world as the Vedas say—*mahad yaksham bhuvanasya madhye tapsai krāntam salilasya prishṭhe* "On the surface of the still waters of the primal lake of the Creator, the Yaksha appeared and began to perform his gymnastics by the power of Heat (*tapas*) ". The stepping of the Yaksha this way is distinct from the rhythmic dance of Śiva. Wherever there is rhythm in the movement, the axial line does not lose its mooring. But the capering movements of the Yaksha are meaningless, disruptive of the normal balance and contradictory.

The Yaksha or the Pramatha is the Gaṇa which is indispensable for the cosmic process on the one hand and a problem on the other. Prajāpati was faced with this dilemma. The greatness of the Yaksha, which was the cosmos itself, was frightening. It was no doubt flattering to the Yaksha to appear too big but that colossal size would swallow or engulf Prajāpati himself, unless it was brought under a measure, a rhythm or overall control. As the *Ṛig Veda* says—*etāvānasya mahimā*—such was the dimensional vastness of Yaksha (as the Cosmos). It opened its mouth to gulp down its maker, as if food wanted to eat the eater of food. The Vighna had appeared and Prajāpati found himself in a strange predicament. The Yaksha whom he considered as essential for the creative activity became a challenge to him.

In this conflict Prajāpati realised a miraculous solution of his difficulty which settled matters once and for all. He said to himself : ' If Yaksha is great, let me become greater'—*ato jyāyamścha pūrushaḥ*. There the matter ended. He gave a long rope to the Yaksha to become as big as he liked and to occupy the whole space with his size, but in order to excel him, Prajāpati became bigger, and thereby his superiority prevailed over Yaksha who became inferior to him.

But how this miracle was achieved ? Prajāpati took resort to an arithmetical trick. He allowed the Yaksha the liberty of the circumference to inflate as much as possible, but he reserved for himself the centre. Prajāpati did not seize upon dimension, but he denied himself the privilege of length, breadth and thickness. By losing all dimensions he himself became the centre. The invisible and incalculable mathematical point which is unpredicable and beyond any kind of positive affirmation. This trick of Prajāpati the Creator worked wonderfully well and the Yaksha was floored. The very root of his arrogance and conceit, viz., the vast size, ceased to have any meaning. Vighna discovered some one who was greater than him and accepted him as his master. The Gaṇa found his Gaṇapati. The Vighna was brought under a leader Vināyaka or Vighneśvara who is God Gaṇapati. All the Gaṇas submitted to him and acknowledged his suzerainty as stated—*gaṇānāṁ tvā gaṇapatiṁ havāmahe*—"We invoke you as the Lord of Gaṇas." You are sovereign of all the Bhūtas and Yakshas, Bhūtapati, Yaksheśvara, Gaṇeśvara. All point to the same idea of the Gaṇas on the one hand and of their controlling Lord on the other.

In every assembly the Gaṇapati must take a foremost seat amidst the Gaṇa hosts, otherwise the assembly becomes a tower of tears, a true Babel-Mandap. Therefore it is said—" O Gaṇapati, be seated here in our midst, for you are verily supreme over all by the power of your mind. Whatever physical vastness be in the members of the assembly, the leadership rests in him who has a big mind. Whatever action is done anywhere cannot be accomplished without you. Such, O Maghavan, is thy greatness."[80]

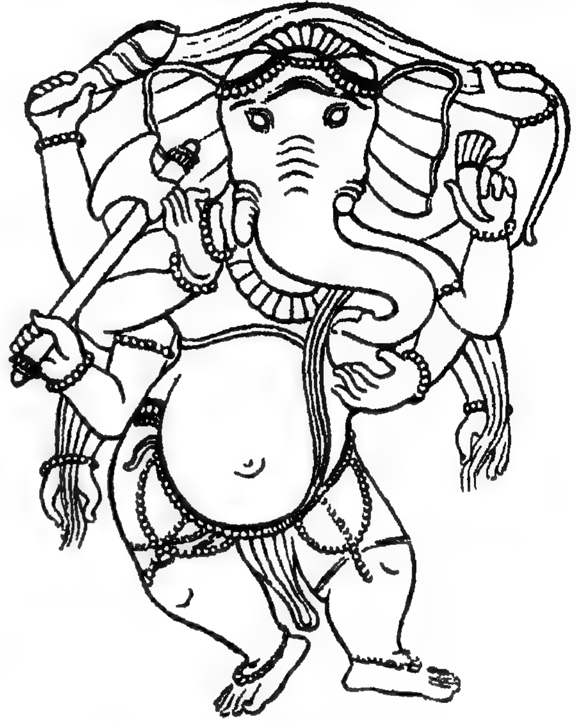
Gaṇapati is also named Brahmaṇaspati or ' Lord of Magnitude '. Magnitude or Vastness was the Yaksha, for whom 'Brahman' is also an accepted synonym throughout Sanskrit literature. There are two aspects of Brahman; the one is This Brahman and the other is That Brahman. By This is meant the Brahman as cosmos (*idaṁ sarvam*) and by That (*tat*) is meant the Transcendent Being who is also Brahman. This distinction is clearly brought out in an Upanishadic passage—" That, indeed, please know as Brahman, and not This (cosmos) which people are mistakenly worshipping as Brahman."[81] The latter is really Brahman and the former, its lord, is Brahmaṇaspati.

It was the '*Tadeva*' doctrine of the ancient metaphysicians in which the manifest (cosmos-) Brahman is negated and the other Brahman, Tadeva, rehabilitated. That transcendental Reality (Tadeva) is enunciated in the *Yajur Veda* to be identical with Brahman and Prajāpati and all the other gods are but his manifestations.[82] That Brahmaṇaspati is the Lord of all Brahma-Yakshas and as Gaṇapati the Master of all the Gaṇa-Pramathas, and is in his own right the supreme king, *Jyeshṭha-Rājā* (where *Rājā* is a synonym

of Yaksha and thereby the appellation *Jyeshṭha-Rājā* points to the sovereign Lord of Yakshas who is Rudra and Vaiśravaṇa in the later patheon).[*]

It may be asked why the elephant's head was chosen as the symbol of Gaṇapati. The answer is that the elephant's head was made the symbol of the inflated ego or the conscious 'I', the first principle which emanated from the unmanifest Prajāpati, for the simple reason that the elephant is of the most huge size amongst all creatures. That is the nature of Ahaṁkāra also, since it is the modification of *Mahat*, or what in the *Gītā* has been named as *Mahad-brahma* (*Gītā* 14.3-4).

There is also a cult aspect to this doctrine of Brahmaṇaspati-Gaṇapati. It has been given a place in the Hindu calender year on the fourth bright day of the month of Bhādrapada which is the Gaṇeśa-Chaturthī Day. It is the biggest festival in honour of Gaṇapati and is widely celebrated as the most important part of the Gaṇapati cult. But there is a crude popular aspect of this folk cult, viz., pelting of stones indiscriminately after sunset believing the target to be the Vighna or genius of obstacles whom the people intend to hit as Gaṇapati himself had done.



Dancing Gaṇapati. In Kala Bhavan.

On the next morning of the Gaṇapati festival comes the Ṛishi-Pañchamī Day and there is a meaning behind this juxtaposition. The Gaṇa is a host, an assemblage or association whereas the Ṛishi Prāṇa signifies 'detachment' (*asaṅga bhāva*) and by its stern solitude and unwavering temperament it remains aloof and is able to conquer the Gaṇa, Yaksha or Pramatha. Prajāpati prior to creation is termed as the one Ṛishi who spreads his rays or powers of light for the sake of manifestation, but also withdraws them to his own centre as his true nature. He becomes a god amongst gods but at the same time retains his Godhead; thus the Gaṇeśa-Chaturthī and the Ṛishi-Pañchamī festivals are complementary to each other, the former as the cult-symbol of Nirukta (definable) Prajāpati and the latter of his Anirukta (undefinable) nature.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Mountain-Chariot of Rudra-Śiva

The whole cosmos is conceived of as the Great Chariot of Rudra-Śiva which is the work of Viśvakarmā and comprised of all the gods (*sarvadevamaya*), of all the worlds (*sarvalokamaya*) and all the material elements (*sarvabhūtamaya*), and of immortal divine nature (*divya*) (*Liṅga Purāṇa* 72.1-2). The characteristic feature of the chariot is movement and this golden car (*sauvarṇa ratha*) is distinguished by ceaseless movement or rhythmic pulsation. This rhythm is created by the forces of heat and cold symbolised by the sun on right and the moon on the left side. The sun is said to be mounted on his chariot of twelve spokes and the moon on that of sixteen spokes.

It was a grand imagery to speak of the solar car as the *Saṁvatsara* of twelve months each conceived of as a spoke, the whole forming the energies of the twelve gods or Ādityas. The chariot of the moon has sixteen spokes and each is identified with the daily rotation of the moon during each half-month and spoken of as one *kalā* or digit of the moon god. When we think of these digitations of the sun and the moon we come face to face with nature's design in parcelling out the movement of Time into shorter durations which are brought into existence by the overriding laws of tension and rhythm controlled by some cosmic dynamism.

The Purāṇic writer conceives of the 27 constellations as the ornaments of the moon and the six seasons as the fellies of the revolving wheels of both sun and moon. It is just a poetic way of giving expression to the cosmic revolution underlying the movement of the Time Wheel. The rising moun-

tain and the setting mountain form the anode and cathode of this lofty chariot. The golden mountain Meru which is the immovable centre of the universe is the support (*adhishṭhāna*) of this great chariot. The most distinguished feature of this chariot is its Movement, Speed or Velocity which is manifest in the form of the Saṁvatsara or the Year.[84] The two revolving wheels are the two six-monthly periods or the two tropics in the northern and the southern hemispheres.[85]

The Purāṇa writer rises to a higher level in describing this chariot as the whole cosmos in its physical, ethical and metaphysical aspects and thinks that all the aspects of life form an integral part of it, as, in fact, they are.

The concept of a cosmic chariot is found in the *Yajur Veda* as the chariot of Sūrya symbolised as the Saṁvatsara. It is subsequently associated with Svāmī Kārttikeya of which a description is found in the *Matsya Purāṇa*. We also find it in the *Devī-Māhātmaya* where the devas arranged a chariot for the Great Goddess. But earlier the author of the *Liṅga Purāṇa* gives a very grandiloquent description of the Mountain-chariot of Śiva identified as Saṁvatsara. We find the germs of this idea in the *Ṛig Veda* itself where Time in conceived of as a Ratha (*Ṛig Veda*, 1.164.2-3, 11, 13 and other mantras). One thing becomes obvious, namely that Rudra-Śiva, Indra and Sūrya were held as identical for the purpose of the conception of the cosmic chariot as the Saṁvatsara and the grand Wheel of Time. All individual creatures are bound to the wheels of this chariot which have a thousand spokes and in the revolving of the Time Wheel spoke after spoke comes face to face and thus all individual creatures fulfil their session of life in the movement of the Saṁvatsara at one point or the other.

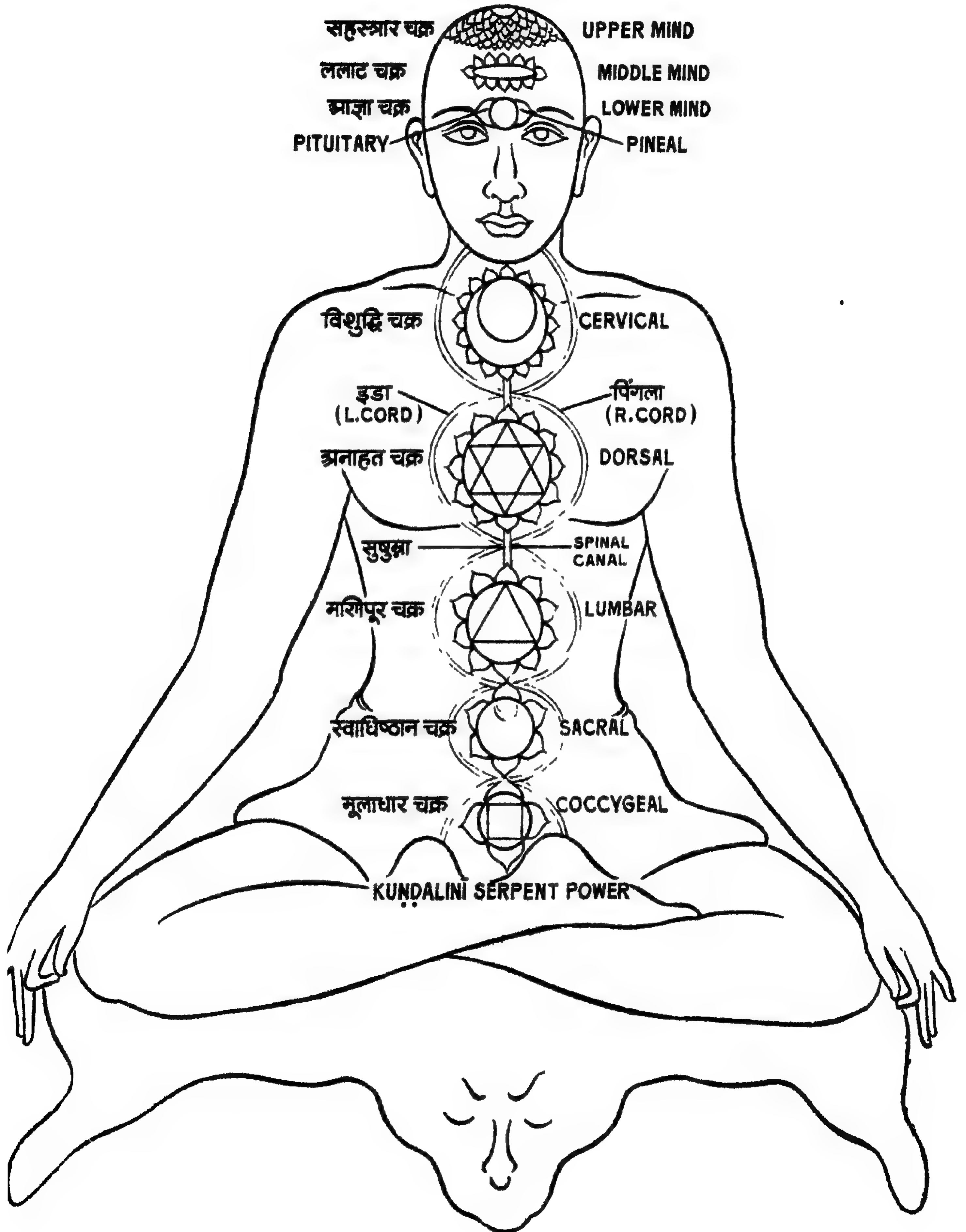
The Great God Mahādeva riding in this chariot is accompanied by all the Devas and Gaṇas in an all out campaign for the defeat of the Asuras. He is god Mahākāla the Lord of Eternal Time. Time is the chariot with its flag unfurled for the duration of a thousand divine years.

The Great God Śiva within the Central Nervous System of human body. See pp. 4-7.

अष्टचक्रा नवद्वारा
देवानां पूरयोध्या
Atharva Veda

The Tranquil City of God
with eight *chakras* and
nine city-gates.

THE THOUSAND-PETALLED
LOTUS OF THE MIND



NOTES

1. *maho devo martyāñ ā viveśa* RV. 4.58.3.
2. (*a*) *tvam agne rudraḥ* RV. 2.1.6 ; (*b*) *martyeshvagniramṛito ni dhāyi* RV. 10.45.7 ; (*c*) *idaṁ jyotiramṛtaṁ martyeshu* RV. 6.9.4 ; (*d*) *prāṇo vā'gniḥ* ŚB. 2.2.2.15 ; (*e*) *prāṇo'mṛitaṁ yaddhyagne rūpam* ŚB. 9.1.2.32 ; (*f*) *ayaṁ manushyeshu prāṇo'-gnistametadāha* ŚB. 6.7.3.11.
3. *yo vai rudraḥ so'gniḥ* ŚB. 5.2.4.13.
4. *rudro'gniḥ*, *Tāṇḍya* B. 12.4.24.
5. *esha rudraḥ, yadagniḥ* TB. 1.1.5.8-9 ; 1.1.6.6. ; 1.1.8.4 ; 1.4.3.6.
6. *agniḥ sarvā devatāḥ* AB. 2.3.
7. *sa devāñ eha vakshati* RV. 1.1.
8. *sa yadasya sarvasyāgraṁ sṛijyate tasmādagniragrirha vai tamagnirityāchakshate paro'ksham* ŚB. 6.1.1.11.
9. *nahyaṅga nṛito tvadanyaṁ vindāmi rādhase* । *rāye dyumnāya śavase cha girvaṇaḥ* ॥ RV. 8.24.12. See also RV. 8.24.9 ; 1.129.7 ; 2.22.4.
10. *brahma sūryasamaṁ jyotiḥ* VS. 23.48.
11. *atrā vo nṛityatāmiva tīvrореṇurajāyata* RV. 10.72.6.
12. *avyaktaṁ liṅgamuchyate* । *Liṅga Purāṇa* I. 3.1.
13. *etāvānasya mahimā atojyāyāṁścha pūrushaḥ* RV. 10.90.3.
14. *ayaṁ loko jālamāsīchchhakrasya mahato mahān* । *tenāhamindrajālenāmūṁstamasābhi dadhāmi sarvān* ॥ AV. 8.8.8.
15. *īśvaraḥ sarvabhūtānāṁ hṛiddeśe'rjuna tishṭhati* । *Gītā* 18.61
16. *ayaṁ vāva śiśuryo'yaṁ madhyama prāṇaḥ* ŚB. 14.5.2.2.
17. ŚB. 6.1.3.8-16.
18. ŚB. 6.1.3.18. *Tānyetānyashṭāvāgnirūpāṇi* । *kumāro navamaḥ saivāgnestrivṛittā* ॥ Cf. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 6.65 ; *Vishṇu Purāṇa* I. 5.25 ; *Garuḍa P.* I. 4.18.
19. *Mārkaṇḍeya P.* 50.10.
20. *ime vai dyāvāpṛithivī rodasī* ŚB. 6.4.4.2 ; 6.7.3.2 ; *dyāvāpṛithivī vai rodasī* AB. 2.41.
21. *Liṅga Purāṇa* I. 106.25-6.
22. *ajasya rūpe kimapisvidekam* RV. 1.164.6.
23. *shaḍurvīḥ* RV. 6.47.3 ; 10.14.16.
24. *aditirdyauraditirantarikshamaditirmātā sa pitā sa putraḥ* । *viśve devā aditiḥ pañcha janā aditirjātamaditirjanitvam* ॥ RV. 1.89.10.
25. *aditerdaksho ajāyata dakshādvatiḥ pari* ॥ *aditirhyajanishṭa daksha yā duhitā tava* । RV. 10.72.4-5.
26. *samudrādūrmiḥ madhumañ udārat* RV. 4.58.1.
27. RV. 10.5.7.
28. *chatvāri śṛiṅgā trayo asya pāda dve śirshe sapta hastāso asya* । *tridhā baddho vṛishabho roravīti maho devo martyāñ ā viveśa* ॥ RV. 4.58.3.
29. *chatuḥ śṛiṅgo'vamīdgaura etat* । RV. 4.58.2.
30. *sambhṛitaṁ pṛishadājyam* RV. 10.90.8 ; *ghṛitena pṛithivī vyudyate* RV. 1.164.47.
31. *sa tredhātmānaṁ vyākuruta* । *ādityaṁ tṛitīyaṁ vāyuṁ tṛitīyaṁ sa esha prāṇastredhā vihitaḥ* ॥ ŚB. 10.6.5.3.
32. *trirasya tā paramā santi satyā spārhā devasya janimānyagneḥ* । RV. 4.1.7.
33. *ete hīdaṁ sarvaṁ vāsayante tasmādvasavaḥ iti* ŚB. 11.6.3.6.
34. *yo'yaṁ manushyeshu prāṇo'gnistametadāha* ŚB. 6.7.3.11.
35. *brāhmaṇo jajñe prathamo daśaśīrsho daśāsyaḥ* । AV. 4.6.1.
36. *daśeme purushe prāṇā ātmaikādaśaḥ* । *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Up.* 3.9.4.
37. *Liṅga Purāṇa* I. 22.23-25.
38. *indro māyābhiḥ pururūpa īyate* RV. 6.47.18.
39. *tvashṭā rūpāṇāṁ janitā paśūnām* । AV. 9.4.6.
40. *keśī vishasya pātreṇa yadrudreṇāpibatsaha* । RV. 10.136.7.
41. *yāvadbrahma vishṭhitaṁ tāvatī vāk* । RV. 10.114.8.
42. RV. 1. 3.10-12.
43. *yadvālamātrādasambhinnāstasmādvālakhilyāḥ* ŚB. 8.3.4.1 ; KB. 30.8.

(43*a*) *yaśchāyamadhyātmaṁ śārīrastejomayo'mṛitamayaḥ purusho'yameva sa yo'yamātmedamamṛitamidaṁ brahmedaṁ sarvam* । ŚB. 14.5.5.1.

44. *śiro hi prathamaṁ jāyamānasya jāyate* ŚB. 8.2.4.18 ; 10.1.2.5 ; *Tāṇḍya B.* 22.9.4 ; ŚB. 3.4.1.19.
45. *prāṇaḥ prajānāmudayatesha sūryaḥ.*
46. *Vishṇu Purāṇa* I. 2.31.
47. ŚB. 6.2.1.12, 6.2.1.14.
48. ŚB. 6.2.1.12 ; AB. 2.6.
49. ŚB. 6.3.1.22.
50. *agninā rayimaśnavat poshameva dive dive* । RV. 1.1.3.
51. *purusho vai paśuḥ* ŚB. 13.1.8.6 ; AB. 2.24.
52. *paśavaḥ sahasraṁ* *Tāṇḍya B.* 16.10.12.
53. AB. 5.25 ; KB. 27.5.
54. TB. 1.3.8.5 ; *Tāṇḍya B.* 18.6.26.
55. *brahmādyaḥ sthāvarāntāścha devadevasya dhīmataḥ* ॥ *paśavaḥ parikīrtyante saṁsāra-vaśavartinaḥ* ॥ *Liṅga Purāṇa* II. 9.11-12.
56. RV. 1.164.16.
57. *Liṅga Purāṇa* II. 73.49.
58. *Śiva Purāṇa,* Vāyavīya Saṁ. 16.7-25.
59. *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* 50.10.
60. *Liṅga Purāṇa* I. 99.7-11.
61. *Vāyu Purāṇa* 4.89.
62. *Ibid.* 4.90.
63. *Vishṇu Purāṇa* I. 2.56.
64. *dyauḥ pitā pṛithivī mātā* TB. 3.8.9.1 ; ŚB. 13.1.6.1.
65. *aditir mātā sa pitā sa putraḥ* RV. 1.89.10.
66. *Bṛihannāradīya Purāṇa* II. 73.2, 15.
67. *Ibid.* 73.28.
68. *Harivaṁśa* II. 125.26.
69. *Ibid.* 125.29.
70. *Hariharātmakavyaktākshara, ibid.* 125. 31.
71. *Ibid.* 125.31.
72. *Ibid.* 125.33.
73. *Ibid.* 132.35.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.* 125.42.
76. *namaste bhagavān vishṇu namaste bhagavān śivaḥ, ibid.* 125.56.
77. RV. 6.69.6.
78. *Manusmṛiti* 1.6.
79. *Ibid.* 1.5.
80. RV. 10.112.9.
81. *Kena Up.* 1.4.
82. VS. 32.1.
83. RV. 2.23.1.
84. *Liṅga Purāṇa* II. 72.7.
85. *Ibid.*

DESCRIPTION OF PLATES

Frontispiece :

Maheśamūrti, representing the *pañchabrahma* conception of Śiva with five faces, viz., Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpurusha and Īśāna, respectively the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and sky. In the sculpture only three faces are shown. The front one with the pleasant expression is Sadyojāta, the proper right one is Aghora or terrifying aspect and the face on the proper left is Vāmadeva, shown as the female head of Pārvati with a feminine grace. This is one of the most magnificent examples of rock-sculpture anywhere in the world. Carved in the Elephanta Caves, near Bombay. 8th century A.D. Photo : A S I. See *pp.* 18-20.

Plate I. Seated Paśupati in *padmāsana* or Śiva as Lord of Animals. This is the ancient-most representation of Śiva as an anthropomorphic image with a trident-shaped head-gear. Probably the figure shows Śiva as Tryambaka with three faces, one frontal and two lateral. The other noteworthy features include Śiva as *Ūrdhvaretas*, i.e., the *membrum verile* in an erect form which is the characteristic mark of numerous images of Śiva in the Pāśupata sect of the great teacher Lakulīśa. Between the legs of Śiva's seat is the figure of an antelope which was also associated with the Mrigavyādha or Śiva as Great Hunter. The god is wearing a triangular necklace with five strings on the chest and his arms are covered with profuse bangles (*khādayaḥ*) from shoulder to wrist showing him to be the father of the Maruts. The god is surrounded by four animals, namely rhinoceros and bison on proper right, and elephant and tiger on proper left. Above the head is an epigraph in the pictographic script of the Indus Valley. The animals partake of the conception of *chatushpada-paṅkti*, i.e., a row of quadrupeds treated as a sacred symbol on many ancient monuments. These are all wild beasts showing the elemental strength of the primeval forest. These animals are also represented moving in a file on a prismatic seal of the Indus Valley (ASI—AR. 1924-5, pl. XXII c) and also on a clay-seal from Tell Asmar (*Annual Bib. of Indian Archaeology for* 1932, Vol. VII, pl. I b).

The date of this Paśupati sealing is circa 2000 B.C.—a fact rooted in the archaeology of the Indus civilisation where the people were worshippers of Paśupati (Śiva) whose legacy was transmitted to the historical period of Śaivism. Paśupati Śiva is mentioned several times in the *Yajurveda*, cf. the Hundred-fold Invocation (*Śatarudriya*).

Because of the cross-legged seat, *Ūrdhvaretas*, threehorned head-dress, the antelope below the seat and the four big animals, the identification of the god as Paśupati Rudra is beyond all doubts. See *pp.* 4,33,41,45-7.

Photo : A S I.

Plate II. Śiva Liṅga from Guḍimallam, near Reniguṇṭā, North Arcot District. The characteristic feature of this image is the figure of Śiva as Mahābhūta, the Great Being, occupying the front portion of the liṅga in a standing human form. In Tamil literature of the Sangam period, Śiva is often described under the epithet *mahābhūta* and so also in Sanskrit literature. "This is a realistic phallic emblem, 5 ft. in height, with a figure of Śiva carved on its lower side. The deity is two-armed, holds as attributes a ram, battle-axe (*paraśu*), and water-vessel, and stands firmly on a crouching Yaksha of the Bharhut pedestal type. This Yaksha is evidently the *apasmāra purusha*, the symbol of *mala*, which supports the figure of Naṭarāja in the later iconography ; ...The stone is finely wrought and highly polished. Both in style and costume the figure is closely related to the standing Yaksha types of Bharhut and Sanchi, but the workmanship is more accomplished and more forcible". (Coomaraswamy) The liṅgam has been rightly assigned to the first or second century B.C. The figure carries a spear fixed on the left side. The image is the most appropriate conception of Śiva as worshipped in South India during the Sangam period when numerous invocations of this deity were composed. For a detailed inconographic analysis of this sculpture, see T.A.G. Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography, pp.* 65-69. *Pp.* 42-5,51.

Photo : A S I.

Plate III. The Jyotirliṅga of Śiva or the Great God Mahādeva as the Pillar of Fire, surrounded by a circle of flames. Śiva in Vedic religion was identified with Fire in its two aspects of Light and Heat and it was believed that the towering axis was of immeasurable height. Vishṇu and Brahmā attempted to scale its stature. Brahmā went up but came back with wounded pride. Vishṇu intuitively had a vision of the transcendent nature of the Lord. This great idea is emphatically depicted in the Jyotirliṅga image of Śiva. The Sun with millions of others in the same alignment is the great tower of light named as Agni or Rudra. In Śaiva religion there are twelve Jyotirliṅgas as twelve big centres of pilgrimage.

This beautiful plastic representation of the story comes from Etah, Western U. P., and represents the Pratihāra school of sculpture. About 9-10 cent. A.D. Courtesy : Bharat Kala Bhavan. See *pp.* 42-5.

A similar early representation of Jyotirliṅga also exists at Ellora, Daśāvatāra Cave.

Plate IV. Ekamukhī Śiva Liṅga from Uchahara. Śiva's face shows the perfect expression of samādhi as described by Kālidāsa in his *Kumārasambhava* (3.44-50). The gorgeous matted locks in two tiers are charmingly depicted in an orderly fashion, with a girdling band in the middle and strands of descending locks on the two sides also arranged in a happy manner. The whole treatment is distinguished by a balance and well-defined features, and the effect of eminence imparts dignity to the expression. It is the *sannaddha-jaṭākalāpa* of the poet, but without the ophidian ribbons which would only be scaring in such a serene set-up. The digit of the new moon above (*bālendu*) and the vertial eye in the forehead below (*kapāla-netra*) perfectly balance each other in a face aesthetically perfect, and the neat *akshamālā* on the neck serves as the fitting base of an ascending ornamentation. The moon is the symbol of Soma, the ambrosial essence of life and the death-conquering principle of mental illumination or samādhi.

All the five points detailed by the poet are here represented, namely the slightly beaming pupils made motionless, the eye-lashes still, the vision directed to the centre of the eye-brows, the rays shooting downwards, and combined effect of it all being one of self-vision. In the whole range of Indian sculpture this particular Śiva Liṅga is hard to be surpassed for the expression of spiritual contemplation or samādhi in its face. It is verily the flaming lamp of supreme wisdom, untrammelled by outer flickers—a *nishkampa pradīpa* in the words of Kālidāsa. It is only in the Gupta age that we find such perfection gracing the endeavours of the artist. He was no doubt a real genius who captured a vision of the truth in one of his rare moments. The image seems to have been carved in the last quarter of the fourth or the first quarter of the fifth century when Gupta art was at its best. The height from base to top is 38" and that of the head 10'. Courtesy : Smt. Pupul Jayakar, New Delhi. *Pp.* 52-5, 51.

Plate V. Ekamukhī Śiva Liṅga distinguished by the one-faced human representation of Śiva. It is a beautiful sculpture with the best features of Gupta art, namely introvert facial expression showing inner spiritual illumination, matted locks, beautiful ornaments such as a *maṇimālā* near the line of hair on the forehead, a *gavāksha-chūḍāmaṇi* ornament on the hair above, moon on the forehead, single pearl-string and a broad torque on the neck. It was originally installed in the great Śiva temple at Bhumara where R. D. Banerji found this huge Liṅga and he was the first to publish it. (MASI, No. 16, pl. XV). Two similar Śiva Liṅgas are also known in Gupta sculpture one found at Khoh (size : 6 ft.) and now preserved in the Allahabad Museum (Kala, *Sculptures in the Allahabad Mus.*, *pp.* 30) and the second collected from Uchahara by Mrs. Pupul Jayakar and published by me in the *Lalit Kala* (No. 9) and illustrated here confronting the Bhumara Liṅga, on plate IV. Ht. 6'1". *Pp.* 42-5, 51.
Photo : A S I.

Plate VI. Terracotta head of Śiva with a mass of matted locks. From Ahichchhatra terraced brick temple of Śiva. A typical specimen of Gupta clay-art, circa 5th cent. A.D. Photo : A S I.

Plate VII. Terracotta head of Pārvatī with a gorgeous arrangement of *alakāvali* or frizzled locks. The vertical eye on the forehead is indicated. Both this and the previous figure seemed to have formed part of the decoration on the intermediate terrace of the lofty Śiva temple at Ahichchhatra which seems to have been inspired by the Pāśupata Śaiva teachers who had made Ahichchhatra their centre of activity in the Pañchāla region. Circa 5th cent. A.D. Photo : A S I. See my "Ahichchhatra Terracottas, *Ancient India*, No. 4.

Plate VIII. Head of Śiva in clay showing matted locks, crescent and the vertical eye. Found at Rajghat, the site of old Vārāṇasī, and now deposited in the Bharat Kala Bhavan. Circa 5th century A.D. Courtesy : Bharat Kala Bhavan. *Pp.* 17-18.

Plate IX. Terracotta Head of Ardhanārīśvara, i.e. half-male and half-female form of Śiva. The matted locks of Śiva are shown on the right side and the curled hair of Pārvatī on the left. From the ancient site of Vārāṇasī, now deposited in the Bharat Kala Bhavan. Several other clay statuettes of this theme of Śiva's iconography have been found, showing its popularity in the Gupta age. Courtesy : same. *Pp.* 8, 9, 47-9.

Plate X. Ardhanārīśvara form of Śiva. A colossal standing image carved in the Śiva Temple at Elephanta. Middle of the 8th century A.D. On the head the matted locks of Śiva and the frizzled locks of Pārvatī are shown distinctly and so is the breast of Pārvatī on the left half of the image. The *ūrdhvaretas* feature is also clearly indicated. Śiva is four-armed, one of which is placed on the head of Nandī and another is holding a bow. Pārvatī is holding a mirror in one of her hands, the other being broken. Photo : A S I. See *pp.* 8, 9, 47-9.

Plate XI. Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī. From Kanauj, circa 8 cent. Gurjara-Pratihāra sculpture. Śiva is standing on right and receiving the hand of Pārvatī. On the top are heavenly gods on their respective vehicles. Photo : A S I. *Pp.* 40-2.

Plate XII. Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī (*Kalyāṇasundara mūrti*), a bronze image from South India. Tanjore Art Gallery. Photo : A S I.

Plate XIII. Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī from Etah, Western U. P. Gurjara-Pratihāra art, 9th-10th century. Śiva and Pārvatī are holding their hands together, a priest is making an offering in the Fire-altar. Courtesy : Bharat Kala Bhavan.

Plate XIV. Umā and Maheśvara. The Great God and Goddess are seated in *āliṅgana mudrā*. A fine rendering in South Indian style. Hemavati, Madras. Circa 10th century A.D. Photo : A S I.

Plate XV. Śiva and Pārvatī seated together. South Indian bronze. Chola period, c. 10th century A.D. Photo : A S I.

Plate XVI. The great image of Śiva in Heptadic Aggregation. It is a majestic conception of Śaiva iconography representing the Ashṭamūrti form of Śiva in which the seven figures, three shown frontally and four laterally are arranged in super-imposed registers and the eighth or Ugra Mūrti is not represented at all but is to be inferred in its proper context. The Ashṭamūrti form of Śiva was a fundamental doctrine of the Pāśupata Śaivas symbolising the five gross material elements (*pañcha mahābhūtas*), *prāṇa* and *apāna* and *manas tattva* or Mind.

The image is a monolith of gigantic size, and was found at Parel near Bombay where it was installed in a modern shrine. C. 8th cent. Courtesy : Prince of Wales Museum. *Pp.* 23-7.

Plate XVII. Mahānaṭa Śiva in the Tāṇḍava dance. Only its upper portion of the breast is now preserved. Fortunately what has remained, viz., the head and the arms, adequately illustrate the action of the cosmic dance undertaken by the deity. The expression on the face bespeaks great majesty and steadfast support to the titanic pulsations of the dance. The released energy is expressed through the upper two arms rhythmically thrown up and artistically framing the head, and also the pair of lower arms, one of which in puissant horizontal extension is partially preserved. The fourth arm and the legs must have been portrayed in a manner to convey adequately the power and rhythm inherent in the performance. The twist of the bust towards the proper left is a very significant feature marking both the direction of the force and the overall restraint excercised in its liberation. Dance is primarily the creation of rhythms, the balancing and equipoising of revolutionary tensions in one restrained harmony. This appears to be the earliest representation of the Tāṇḍava motif so far known in Indian art, and one may at once concede that the artist's effort has been crowned with complete success in the portrayal of the necessary elements of the theme, viz., cosmic power lashing into motion but wedded to eternal poise and rest. The ruffled matted locks, the *chintāmaṇi* jewel on the head, the *ananta-valaya* on the arms and the bangles on the wrists serve as happy items of decoration enhancing the general effect of the subject. Ht. 13″. From Nachna Kuthara. Gupta period, 5th century A.D. In the Collection of Smt. Pupul Jayakar, New Delhi. *Pp.* 3, 9, 51.

Plate XVIII. The Tāṇḍava-dancer. A finely executed sculpture in the Cave I, Bādāmī (anc. Vātāpī). Śiva is shown sixteen armed in which he holds different attributes such as *triśūla*, battle-axe and snake. In the background of Śiva's colossal figure on the right is his bull-vehicle, and on the left are seen Gaṇeśa and a male drum-beater. For its masterly carving and profound balance of the sculpture it is one of the finest specimens of early Chālukyan art. C. 6th cent. A.D. Photo : A S I.

Plate XIX. Śiva as Naṭarāja. Dancing the mode of dance which is technically known as *Lalita*. The great god is shown in this stone panel at Ellora engaged in his dance in a vigorous manner. In the eight arms his attributes are a *ḍamaru*, a battle-axe and a śūla and other hands are held in various dancer's poses. Ellora, Rāshṭrakūṭa period, 7th cent. Photo : A S I.

Plate XX. Śiva Naṭarāja, as *dvārapāla* figure. The Great God is performing his cosmic dance with ever-enduring gyrations. The left leg rests on the *apasmāra-purusha* while the right leg is thrown to the other side in the *tāṇḍava* posture. Gaṅgaikoṇḍacholapuram, Chola, 11th century A.D. Photo : A S I.

Plate XXI. The King of Dancers, Naṭarāja in the *raṇa-tāṇḍava* pose. Bronze, from South India, late Chola period, c. 12th century A.D. Photo : A S I.

Plate XXII. Śiva as Tripurāntaka, Destroyer of the Three Cities. Two-armed Great God, riding on his chariot, with his left leg kept forward and the right one behind, aims with his bow at the three cities sculptured above in the wall. Four-faced Brahmā sitting in front of him drives the chariot drawn by two horses. Kailāsanātha Temple, Ellora. A dynamic representation from the best period of Rāshṭrakūṭa Art, 750-850 A.D. Photo : A S I. *Pp.* 26, 50.

Plate XXIII. Killing of the Elephant Demon, *Gajāsurasaṃhāra Mūrti*. Stone image. From Darasuram, now in the Tanjore Art Gallery. Chola, 12th cent. A.D. Photo : A S I.

Eight-armed Śiva after killing the demon Gaja is shown in dancing pose with elephant's skin (*kritti*) held in two of the hands as his covering. To the left of Śiva stands Pārvatī with Skanda in her lap and looks with awe at the Great God immersed in his divine feat. *P.* 41.

Plate XXIV. Killing of the Demon Andhaka. Ellora Cave 29 (Dūmar Leṇa). Early Chālukya, c. 740 A.D. The eight-armed figure of the Great God is piercing the demon with his trident. The goddess sits to his left on the ground. Besides his other attributes, he bears a *kapāla* in one of his hands and the blood flowing down from the body of Andhaka is collected in it. Photo : A S I. *Pp.* 17, 50.

Plate XXV. Mārkaṇḍeyānugraha, or Yamāntaka form of Śiva in which the Great God punishes the Death-god to defend the *brāhmaṇa* boy Mārkaṇḍeya. Ellora Cave 15, 8th century A.D. Photo : A S I.

Plate XXVI. Rāvaṇa lifting Kailāsa (*Kailāsottolana*). The ten-headed king of Laṅkā became filled with the pride of his strength and tilted the seat of Śiva on Kailāsa. Thereupon the God pressed the toe of his foot to the utter discomfiture of Rāvaṇa. Carved in the middle of the 8th century, Ellora, being a grand specimen of the Rāshṭrakūṭa art of the Deccan. Photo : A S I. *Pp.* 27-9.

Plate XXVII. The rock-sculpture of Mahabalipuram depicting the penance of royal sage Bhagīratha and the Descent of Gaṅgā (*Gaṅgāvataraṇa*). In this story Gaṅgā is the symbol of the great flood that is released from heavenly clouds to pour its waters on the earth below, a phenomenon of nature witnessed every year in the hottest season. Gaṅgā also is the symbol of the river of life or Prāṇa descending from the immortal world of gods to the realm of matter.

The sculpture is conceived on a vast scale on the face of a rock open to the sky. On proper right is a shrine in front of which Bhagīratha is seated in an attitude of meditation. In the upper part of the panel his figure is repeated standing on one leg with hands uplifted in the pose of Tapaścharyā. Four-armed Śiva himself with his *gaṇas* is standing by his side and granting a boon to fulfil the wish of the king. In the centre of the panel is a vertical groove through which the stream of the river flowed in rippling waves. The thronging world of devas, nāgas, animals and men is depicted to fill the panel. It must be said that sculptor of the scene was a great genius who visualised the Purāṇic legend of the Descent of Gaṅgā in such a realistic form in which both gods and men were juxtaposed in the formulation of an exceptional event of religious and spiritual glory. Pallava Period, c. 7th century A.D. Photo : A S I. *Pp.* 2, 35-8.

Plate XXVIII. Śiva as Bhairava. The god has a terrific aspect with yawning mouth, protruding eye, twisted moustaches, short erect *jaṭās*, a wrinkled forehead with the third eye, angry eye-brows with a triple contortion between them (the *tripatāka-bhrikuṭi* of Bāṇa), long split ear-lobes and a flabby belly. He wears a flat necklace with raised bosses, bracelets, anklets and a short loin-cloth. A serpent descending from the left shoulder is arranged as the sacred thread with a knot on the god's left f. rmed by its tail looped with the hissing head. Of the four arms, the back right hand holds a long trident, front one seizes the right horn of a bull hurled on the shoulder, the hind leg of the animal being grasped by the left arm held aloft on the other side, and the fourth hand holds a *khaṭvāṅga* (?) or mace with round head marked by radiating grooves. Terracotta plaque (2'2"×2'1"×4.5"), from Ahichchhatra Śiva temple. C. 5th cent. A.D. Photo : A S I. See for the story, *pp.* 1-2, 11-12.

Plate XXIX. Śiva's Gaṇa host, destroying Daksha's sacrifice (*Daksha-yajña-vidhvaṁsa*). The plaque (2'2"×2'1"× 5") shows nine figures arranged in two rows. The figures in the lower row consist of three gods who assembled at the sacrifice and a pair of Śiva *gaṇas* who caused havoc to it. The person with the *vajra* is undoubtedly Indra. The actors in the upper row are Śiva's *pramathas* again, one of whom is attacking a *rishi*, probably the officiating priest at the sacrifice, the last figure seems to be that of Daksha himself.

This terracotta plaque unearthed with a number of others, e.g. one illustrated here on the front plate, had formed part of the frieze around the upper terrace of the Gupta brick temple of Śiva at Ahichchhatra. The holocaust wrought at the sacrifice of Daksha by Śiva's playful hosts is also the subject of another specimen. For the story, see *pp.* 10-12. Photo : A S I.

Plate XXX. Skanda-Kārttikeya on his vehicle peacock. Terracotta figurine, early Gupta period. Mathura Museum (No. 2794). *Pp.* 7-8, 10, 12, 25.

Plate XXXI. Pramatha or Gaṇa of the Great God. F.om Nāchnā Kuthārā. Ht. 27½". Now in the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

This sculpture is a fine vigorous example of Śiva's playful *gaṇa*, duly adorned with fluttering ringlets, wristlets, armlets, a tiger's claw-pendant (*vyāghra-nakha*) and a waistband. Photo : Prince of Wales Museum. See *pp.* 4, 51-4.

Plate XXXII. Gaṇapati, Elephant-headed god, in dancing pose. From Kanauj, c. 8th century A.D. Photo : A S I. See *pp.* 52-4.



1 Paśupati, the Lord of Animals. Mohenjo-daro, c. 2000 B. C. See pp. 4,33,41,45–47.



II Śiva Liṅga and His human form (*purushavigraha*), standing on yaksha. Gudimallam, 1–2 cent. B. C. Pp. 42–5,51.



III Śiva as Jyotirliṅga, Pillar of Fire, being measured by Brahmā and Vishṇu. 8–9 cent. A. D. Pp. 42–5.



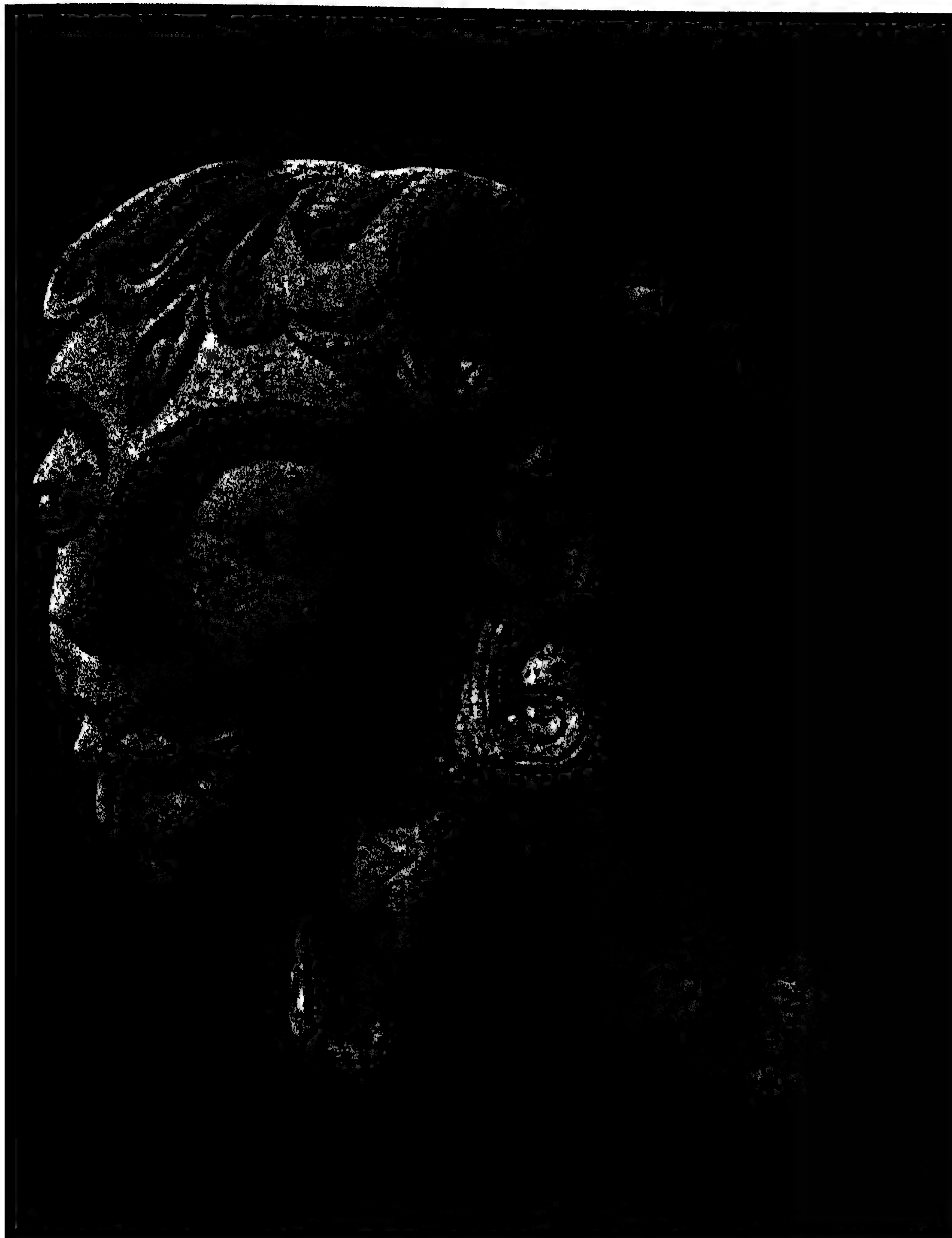
IV Śiva Linga with a human face (Ekamukhi). From Uchahara, about 500 A. D.
Pp. 42–5,51.



V Ekamukhī Śiva Liṅga. From Bhumara Śiva Temple, 6th cent. A. D. Pp. 42–5,51.



VI Head of Śiva with matted locks. From Ahichchhatra Śiva Temple, c. 5 cent. A. D.



VII Head of Pārvatī with alakāvali hair. From Ahichchhatra Śiva Temple, c. 5 cent. A. D.



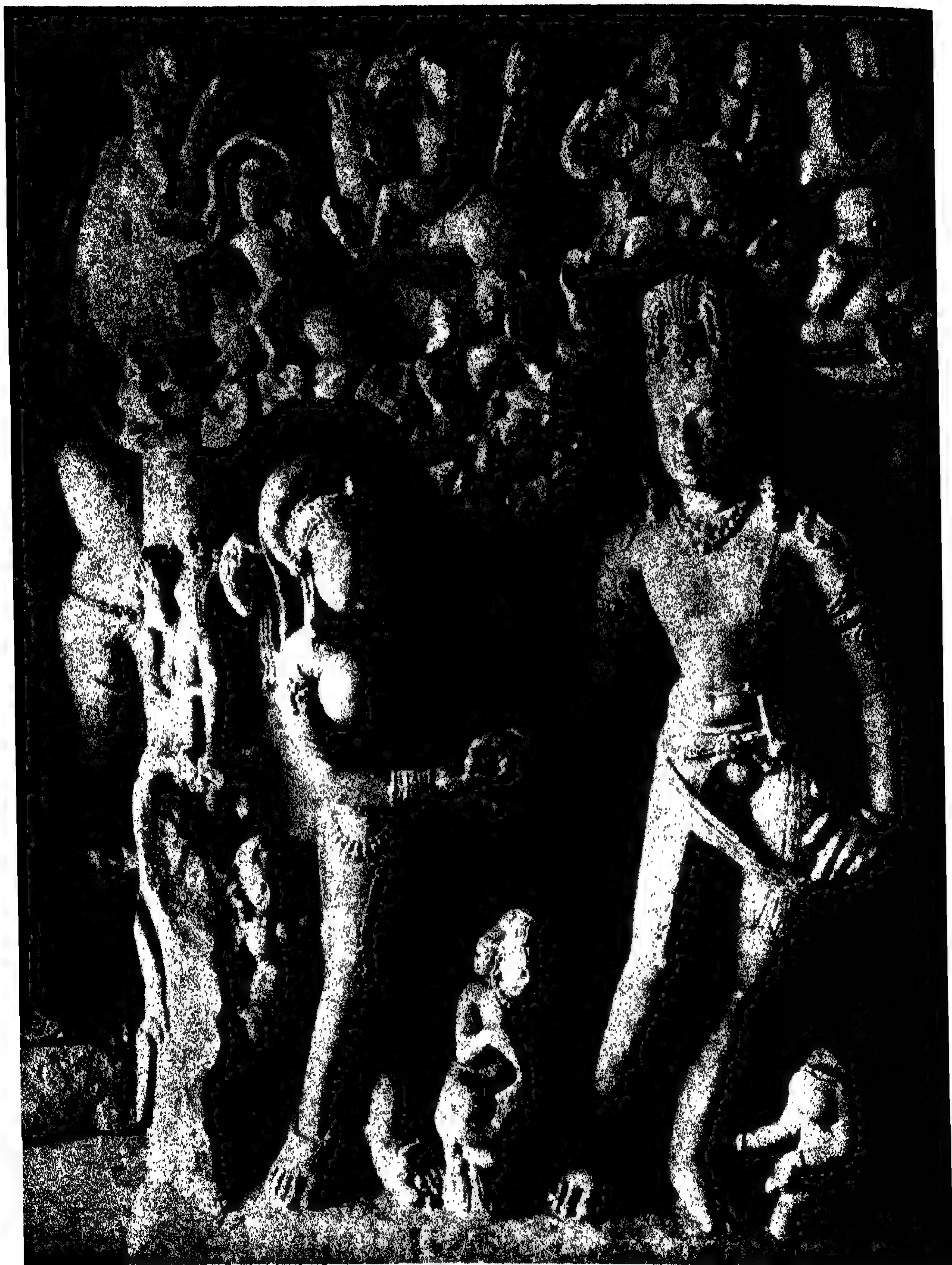
VIII Head of Śiva with jaṭājūṭa and vertical eye. From Rajghat, c. 5th cent. A. D. pp. 17–11.



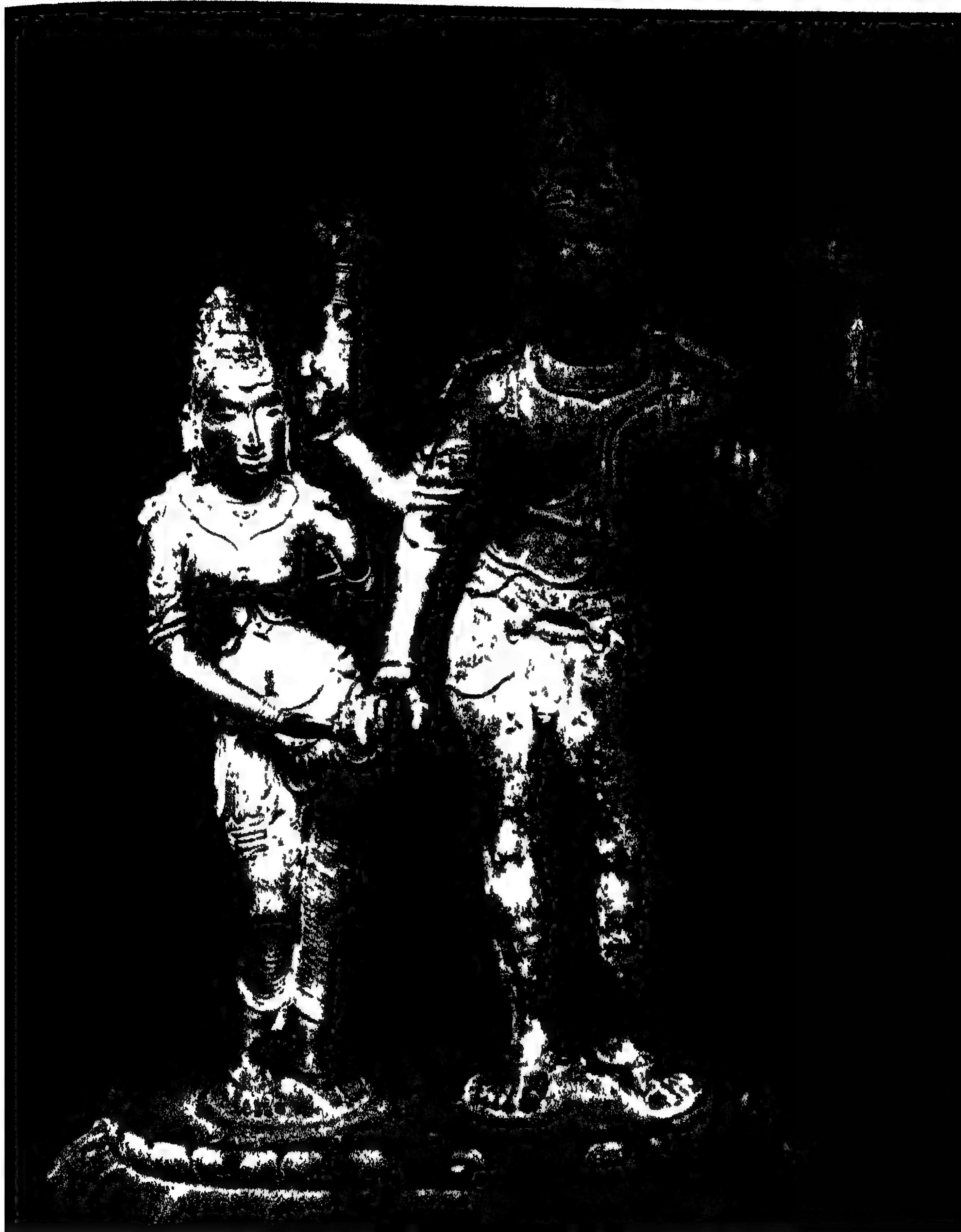
IX Ardhanārīśvara head. From Rajghat, c. 5th cent. A.D. pp. 8,9,47–9.



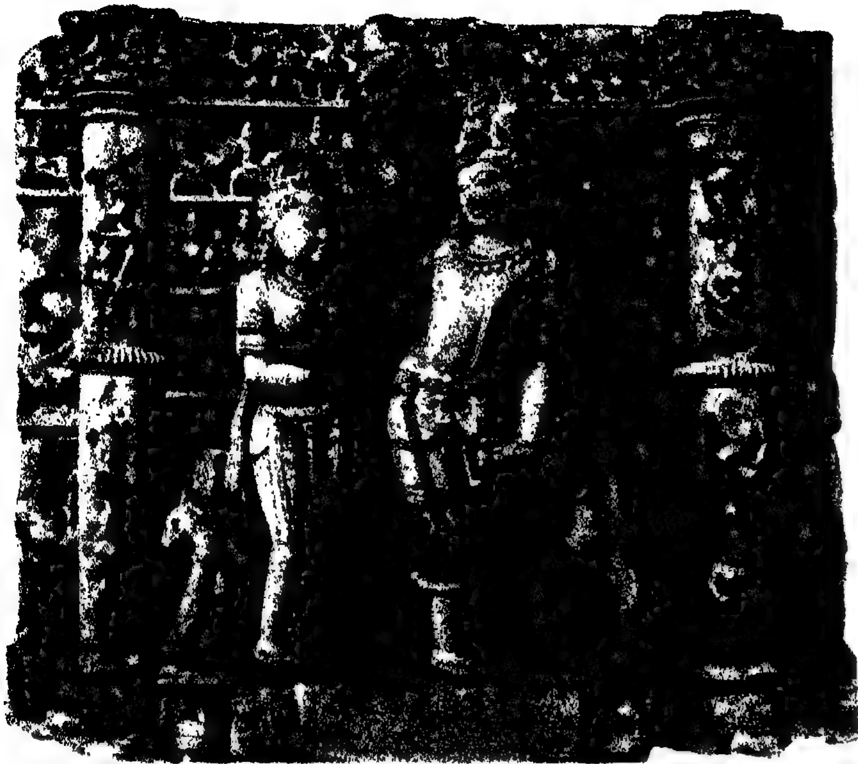
X Ardhanārīśvara Form of Śiva. Elephanta Śiva temple, c. 8 cent. A. D. Pp. 8,9,47–9.



XI Marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī. From Kanauj, c. 8th century. Pp. 40–3.



XII Kalyāṇa-sundara-mūrti. Bronze, from South India, c. 10 cent. A. D. Pp. 40–2.



XIII Śiva-Pārvatī Vivāha. From Etah, c. 9–10 cent. A. D.



XIV Umā Maheśvara. Hemavati, Madras, c 10 cent A. D.



XV Śiva and Parvatī. Bronze, South India, c. 10 cent A D. Pp 40–2.



XVI Ashṭamūrti Śiva or the Great God with Eight Forms From Parel, c. 6 cent. A. D. Pp. 23-7



XVII Mahanata Śiva, From Nachna Kuthara, Gupta period, 5 cent A D Pp. 3,9,51.



XVIII The Tāndava-dancer. Badami Cave I, Chālukya, late 6 cent. A. D. Pp. 3,9,51.



XIX Śiva as Naṭarāja. Ellora, 7th cent. A. D. Rāshṭrakūṭa sculpture. Pp. 3, 9, 51,



XX Śiva Naṭarāja Gaṅgaikoṇḍacholapuram, Chola period, 11 cent. A D. Pp. 3,9,51.



XXI King of Dancers, Naṭarāja. Bronze, from South India. C. 12 cent, A. D. Pp. 8, 9, 51.



XXII Śiva as Tripurāntaka. Ellora, Kailāsanātha Temple, 750–850 A. D. Pp 26, 50.



XXIII Killing of the Elephant Demon. Stone image. From Darasuram, Chola, 12 cent. A. D. Pp. 41.



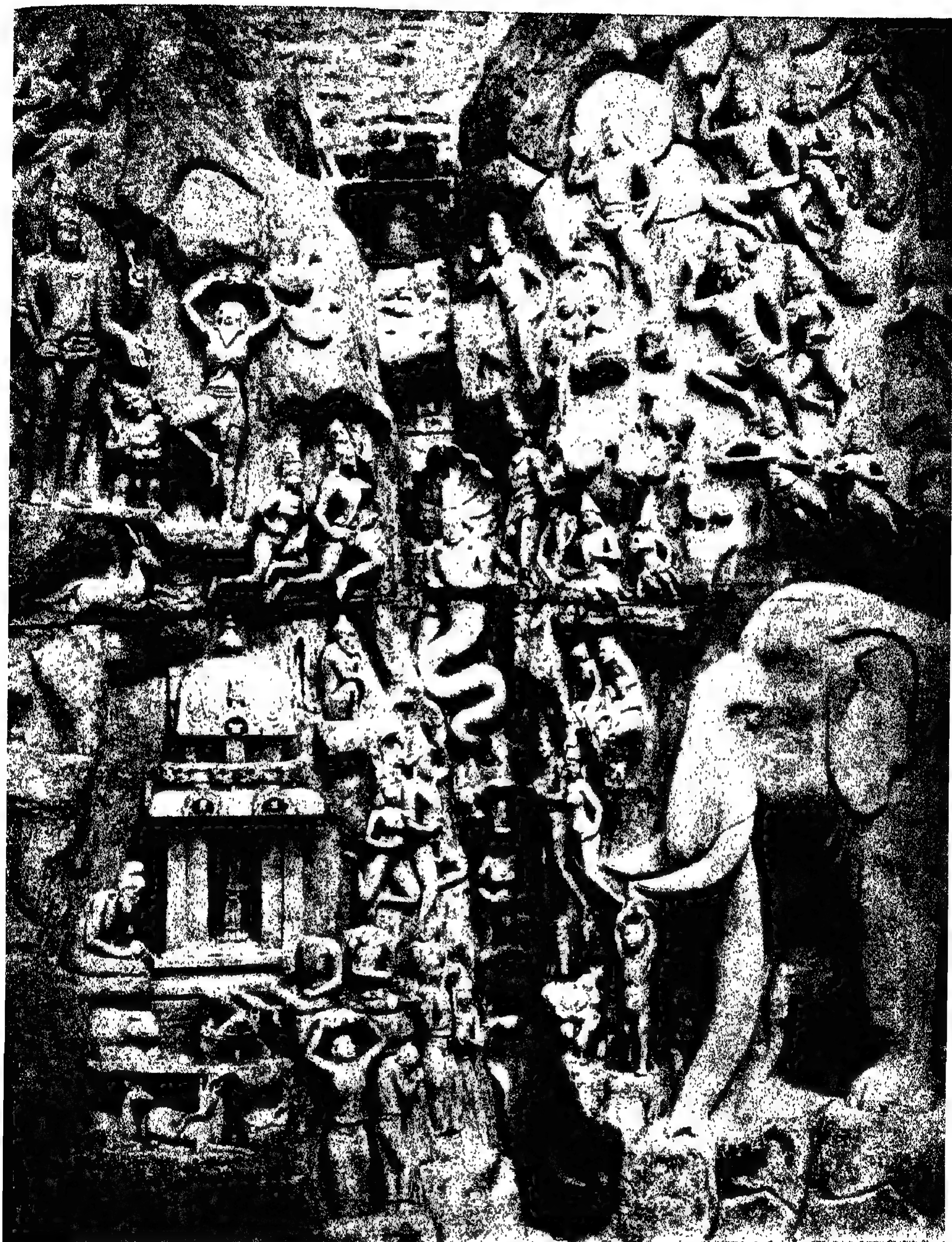
XXIV Killing of the Demon Andhaka. Ellora Cave 29 (Dumar Lena), c. 640 A. D. Pp. 17, 50



XXV Śiva Vanquishing the God-of-Death (Yamāntaka). Ellora Cave 15, 8 cent. A. D.



XXVI Rāvaṇa shaking Kailāsa mountain Ellora Cave 14, 8 cent. A. D. Pp 87–9.



XXVII Descent of Gaṅgā, Gaṅgāvataraṇa. Mahābalipuram, Pallava period, c. 7 cent. A. D. Pp. 8, 35–8.



XXVIII Śiva as Bhairava. Terracotta plaque from Ahichchhatra Śiva temple, c. 5 cent. A. D. Pp. 1–2, 11–2.



XXIX Śiva-gaṇas, destroying Daksha's sacrifice. Terracotta plaque, Ahichchhatra Śiva temple, c. 5 cent. A. D. Pp. 10–12.



XXX Skanda-Kārttikeya on his peacock. Terracotta. Mathura, early Gupta period. Pp. 7–8, 10, 12, 25.



XXXI Gaṇa. From Nachnā Kuṭhārā. Gupta period. Pp. 4, 51–2, 52–4.



XXXII Nṛitya Gaṇapati. From Kanauj, c. 8 cent. A. D. Pp. 52–4.

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